

In The End (We Are Left Bereft)

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Explicit

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F/M, Gen

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Relationships:

Bakugou Katsuki/Dabi, Bakugou Katsuki & Toga Himiko, Ashido Mina & Bakugou Katsuki, Aizawa Shouta | Eraserhead & Bakugou Katsuki, Bakugou Katsuki & Bakugou Masaru & Bakugou Mitsuki, Bakugou Katsuki & League of Villains, Bakugou Katsuki & Todoroki Enji | Endeavor, Bakugou Katsuki & Takami Keigo | Hawks & Dabi

Characters:

Bakugou Katsuki, Original Female Character(s), Dabi (My Hero Academia), Toga Himiko, Ashido Mina, Shinsou Hitoshi, Todoroki Shouto, Class 1-A (My Hero Academia), Aizawa Shouta | Eraserhead, Yamada Hizashi | Present Mic, Kayama Nemuri | Midnight, Yagi Toshinori | All Might, Hakamata Tsunagu | Best Jeanist, Takami Keigo | Hawks, Shigaraki Tomura | Shimura Tenko, League of Villains (My Hero Academia), Todoroki Enji | Endeavor, Todoroki Fuyumi, Chisaki Kai | Overhaul, Eri (My Hero Academia)

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Eraserhead, Protective Class 1-A (My Hero Academia), Mineta Minoru is Expelled from U.A. High School, Shinsou Hitoshi is in Class 1-A, Explicit Sexual Content, Reincarnation, Alternate Universe - Canon Divergence

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Part 1 of [In The End](#)

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[travel into a new body](#), [Reincarnation and Transmigration](#), [BKG AC](#), [The best of self inserts and Oc stories](#), [Hainako's Collection of amazing fanfiction](#), [A Collection of Beloved Inserts](#), [progress](#), [Long Fics to Binge](#), [Kaachan fics](#), [SakurAlpha's Fic Rec of Pure](#) how did you create this you amazing bean, my heart is here, [Magnolia's Favourite Fics](#), [Almost every Bakugou fanfic I have read](#), [Trans Self-Inserts](#), [Iamthewhalelord Favorite Fics](#), [fics that can't get out of my mind](#), [Modern Character in Fictional World](#), [oh stars~! \(^ O ^ ☆♪](#),
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In The End (We Are Left Bereft)

by [ArtsyDeath](#)

Summary

There's static remains of what they had been – memories and impressions, violence pounding deep and hard through her, impatience badly tampered by bouts of apathy.

We're both dead, this is the fundamental basis that makes up Bakugou Katsuki.

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Or: Katsuki is a mess but she's determined to become the *Best*, a will and resonance of the boy whose body she wakes up in after a violent death in another world entirely.

What We Are

Chapter Notes

Sparky = Kaminari

Shitty Hair = Kirishima

Runt = Mineta

Raccoon Eyes = Ashido

Punk = Jirou

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

The mild slap against the back of her head, the scolding – it shouldn't ease something inside of her but it *does*, her gaze fixated somewhere on her socked feet, hands shoved into the pockets of her pants and mouth dipped down in a scowl.

A sigh, a familiar stranger crouching down before her, a firm hand gripping her chin to tilt her head, studying the blossoming bruises, the tampon she'd stuffed up her bleeding nose.

"You can't keep getting into fights like this, Katsuki," the woman says and she shrugs dispassionately, refusing to meet worried eyes.

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Bakugou Katsuki is the name of the body she'd woken up into some eight years ago – breathing in the smell of antiseptic, strangers grasping and squeezing her hands, unable to move, barely able to twitch as the days counted by, fading in and out of sleep, forced to absorb and come to terms with the situation she found herself in.

The strangest thing is the *noise*.

The world as she knew it was no longer quiet but filtered with everything from voices to machines to the low buzz of electronics, the wind outside the hospital room, the shift of the bed, the brush of fabric as she shifted, the crinkle of papers, the-

She spends hours staring up at the ceiling, trying to comprehend the sheer life of the world around her, twitchy and sensitive to the slightest of noise after nearly twenty-two years of complete and utter silence.

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There's static remains of what they had been – memories and impressions, violence pounding deep and hard through her, impatience badly tampered by bouts of apathy.

We're both dead, this is the fundamental basis that makes up Bakugou Katsuki.

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Noise cancelling headphones in bright orange around her neck, the new uniform half-heartedly shrugged on, tie hanging loose around her neck, toast snagged between her teeth and backpack hanging off one shoulder.

Katsuki squints up at the large walls of U.A. knowing she should feel *something* but finding only deep rooted apathy.

Even after everything; their move, the many schools she'd gone through, therapists that didn't stop pushing, doctors that didn't stop shaking their heads - she'd been accepted into U.A. with top scores, the news delivered by All Might himself on a small circular disc.

I owe him this much, she thinks as she dispassionately chews her way through the toast, one hand shoved deep into her pocket as she ambles her way into the school.

-

What's in a Hero? Katsuki doesn't know but she knows she wants to be the *Best*.

In a world of grey scales, a world without meaning, this is what she clings to for it had meant *something* once and she is desperate for it to mean *something* once again.

-

Midoriya Izuku is a name she hasn't heard in years and her mind identifies him as *Deku* long before a nervous mouth opens with a stutter, eyes wide upon her.

Kacchan.

An exchange of nicknames, a stirring of something that had been – a curl of dislike heavy in her gut, cheek heavy against her palm, elbow against the table, half-slumped and already irritated by the choppy

motions of the boy who'd practically shoved himself into her personal space when he'd spotted her with her tie dangling loose around her neck.

"I-It's nice to see you again...?" Deku says awkwardly, wavering in place, painfully earnest for all that he fiddles in place.

Her mouth curls down and she looks away from him – Mitsuki's warnings of starting anything ringing painfully at the back of her mind.

Don't risk this, she thinks as the boy slumps, stammering and rubbing awkwardly at his neck when a girl round face thanks him for something or the other, suitably distracted.

Katsuki drags her noise cancelling headphones up and over her ears, blocking out the rest of the class.

-

Their new homeroom teacher looks as tired as Katsuki feels most days and she stares down at the baseball in her hand, throws it up, catches it with a contemplative squeeze before she draws her elbow back, shifts to get the strength of her shoulder and back into it, feels the sweat in her palm, eyes narrowing as she launches it off, explosion fired loud and volatile just as it leaves her hand.

She's too familiar with her own controlled explosions to do more than twitch, watching as it sails far beyond her original toss, clocking seven hundred meter easily, hands disappearing back into her pockets as she ambles back to the rest of the class.

The rules are delivered with a too sharp grin from their teacher to nervous exclamations from her new classmates while Katsuki's mouth curls down into a scowl.

-

A ruse.

She stares at her new teacher as relief spreads through the room, gaping mouths proclaiming *of course he wouldn't kick us out*. As if he hadn't kicked out his entire class the year before. As if the man wasn't responsible to making sure they came out of the three-year-program as *Heroes* and not scraps barely passing by.

Katsuki narrows her eyes with a *tch*.

-

What's in a Hero?

Katsuki is volatile, friendless, anti-social and prone to reckless behaviour that had ended up with her in the hospital more times than not.

Her teachers all watches her warily, her classmates gives her wide-berth and the path between school and home is spent with knuckles splitting open, blood in her mouth, teens far older than her leering down at her to teach her a lesson about *ego*.

She stops counting the many times she gets expelled, stops counting the scolding's from his parents, stops caring about anything but the dreams of the boy that had been.

I will become the Best.

-

The first time Katsuki acknowledges any of her classmates she's half-way undressed inside the boy's locker room, resolutely avoiding looking at anyone around her as she drags the pants up over her legs, yanking her undershirt up from the hem, ear twitching and gaze turning just in time to see the shitty runt press his eye against a hole leading towards the girl's changing room.

Sparky is laughing, Shitty Hair wavering beside them but *no one is doing anything*.

Katsuki slams her booted foot into the runt's stomach, launching him across the room where he slides into a hard stop against the wall, arms curling around his stomach, a shocked noise as he stares up at her with wide fearful eyes.

Her palms crackles and her teeth bares in a snarl.

"If I see you do anything like that again," she hisses in the shocked silent room. "I'll fucking track you down and beat you half to death." She takes a step forward but Shitty Hair halts her with an arm on her bicep.

"Hey, hey, Bakugou – don't you think you were a bit too harsh there--"

She jolts off with a sharp jerk, grasping for her shirt as she kicks her locker shut and storms out of the room.

-

Katsuki gives anyone and everything a wide-berth, resolutely ignoring the strange looks shot her way, her temper already set on edge when the teams are revealed and she finds herself staring at Four-Eyes who is practically oozing disapproval.

“Violence against our fellow classmates absolutely cannot be condoned!” he tells her, away from the other teams who’d all split up to plan, her shoulders twitching at the wide arcs of his arms as they sweep through the air.

“Then fucking do something next time,” she bares her teeth. “Or do you condone his actions?” she mocks, taking dark pleasure in the splutter and denial. “Less talking, more action.”

She flips him off when he calls her name to *plan*.

Hah.

Her neck prickles at the sharp eyes of All Might follows her down the path but she resolutely ignores him, ignores everything, the sweet ooze of her quirk stinging her nose as anger coils through her.

-

As far as her memories recall Deku is Quirkless.

The boy is a mix of feelings about it – disappointment and resentment but also a sense of *rightness* because he was the best and *of course the shitty Deku didn’t have a-*

Only he *does* and Katsuki finds herself face to face with the proof, a single finger drawn back, desperation and determination alike in the green eyes that meet hers before she abruptly and sharply drops, wall exploding and crumbling behind her as her palms flattens against the ground, legs folding up and twisting around an arm with a sharp *crack* as she breaks it clean with a hard twist.

There’s a cry, legs stumbling back, her foot colliding hard with a chest, booting him across the room with a *smack* as his head hits the stone *hard* and he slides down, dizzy, shocked eyes locked onto hers as she gallantly settles back on her feet with a roll of her shoulders as she

steps towards him.

“I wouldn’t move if I were you,” she informs him plainly when he shifts, that strangely familiar stubborn set in his mouth deepening as he pushes himself up, ignoring her words completely. “You have a concussion.”

He lurches towards her and Katsuki kicks him down.

Again.

And again.

And again.

It’s bloody and brutal but she never reaches for the fake handcuffs at her waist and Deku doesn’t stop until she presses him down flat on his back, barely ruffled as she levels her weight on already cracked ribs.

All Might’s voice rings distant as the time runs out, leaving them in a stalemate, and she steps off him with a scoff.

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Katsuki eats her lunch alone on the roof - a bento carefully arranged by Masaru each morning.

She had told him that he didn’t have to – that lunch was paid and arranged for by the school. But he had insisted and she hadn’t fought him on it.

She stares down at the small sausages arranged into little squids, rice and seaweed forming a smiling whale, vegetables, tofu, omelette and fried shrimps crowding around. There’s a small note with a chibi drawing of his father giving a thumb-up and a *Ganbatte!* on the lid that she carefully folds away inside her math book.

The wind ruffles her hair, a slight chill in the spring weather as she draws the orange chopsticks from their small container, leaning back against the fence surrounding the rooftop as she sets to eat.

-

“Bakugou, please remain behind.”

It’s the last class of the day and she isn’t terribly surprised, sinking lower into her seat with a *tch*, ignoring eyes that dart curiously

towards her as they pass her by, chatter from teenagers already making *friends* passing her by, backpacks rustling as they pack up.

She breathes out, straightening up and shoving her things into her backpack just as the door closes behind the last student, leaving her alone with Aizawa who watches her with dark eyes as she throws it over her shoulder and drags her feet up to him.

“I heard what happened with Mineta earlier,” Aizawa says, no real judgement in his eyes. “I would like to hear from you, however.”

“What’s there to say?” she scoffs. “He found a hole in the wall leading into the girl’s changing room and was getting a fucking hard-on drooling over them. No one did shit so I let him know it wasn’t *okay*.” She leans against the desk beside her, scowling.

“And why didn’t you fetch a teacher? Or simply tell him off?”

Katsuki barely resists rolling her eyes. “Yeah, as if you haven’t seen the way he acts during lessons. *Clearly* just having words with him is working just *fine*.” She folds her arms up. “Why the fuck are you even allowing him here?” she demands. “He’s fucking *filthy*.”

Aizawa stares at her with heavy eyes, the bags below them dark, chin scruffy, an exhaustion that tugs at her already depleted energy levels in empathy.

She twitches when he moves but it’s merely to drag fingers through a mane of dark hair. “You would have us expel him?”

“I never would have allowed him near the Hero course in the first place,” she spits.

Aizawa makes a low *hm*.

“Dismissed,” he says finally and she makes a wide-tour around him, slamming the door shut behind her.

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Katsuki closes the door behind her, ignores the call from his parents as she flops down and wraps herself up in the soft blue covers of her bed, eyes shutting tight.

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Every morning, from early spring to late autumn, at 4 am sharp,

Katsuki goes from a run – chucking her shoes off once she reaches the beach, running through the heavy sand, feeling the ocean that laps at her ankles as she sinks down with every heavy step, alternating between fast and hard paces until her shirt is wet with perspiration and she's struggling for breath, legs wobbly beneath her.

If there's no ice she goes for a swim afterwards, shirt and shorts abandoned on shore – lets the soothing hum of the waves pull her under in a world where everything is muffled and heavy, murky, fish with glittering fins darting past her.

She's gotten really good at holding her breath, counting almost twelve minutes in darkness before she's forced to break surface for air.

It's a soothing routine to her mind.

When she was younger either Mitsuki or Masaru would accompany her, wrapped up a blanket or two depending on the weather. But that had been before she turned ten and she was deemed old enough to go on her own after many loud arguments.

Dagobah Beach had been a dumping ground when they first moved back to Musutafu for her enrolment in U.A. but after nearly three months she'd made good headway with the trash built-up, her running tracks lengthening with every load either of her parents helps her drive away during the weekends.

Katsuki wades up from the ocean, dragging a hand through her short spiky hair, breathing in the spring air as she nabs her shirt and pulls it on, water running from the wet boxers clinging to her thighs as she carefully runs through her morning stretches before contemplating the remaining trash with a crack of her neck.

-

The pervy runt got expelled.

There's a strange ringing noise in her ear as the news, the whispers too loud around her, fingers twitching as she drags her headphones up and over her ears, hands pressing down, muffling the world around her.

Stares at Aizawa-sensei who is practically half-asleep on the podium.

Huh.

-

“Kirishima told us what happened.”

Katsuki stares blankly at the two – a tiny sausage octopus trapped in her chopsticks, headphones on her ears which was the reason as to why she’d missed their arrival completely.

Pink hair, pink skin, strange raccoon-like eyes and yellow antennas on her head – the other rough and punkish looking with purple hair and headphone jacks stretching from her earlobes.

Katsuki mentally sorts them as Raccoon Eyes and Punk as she drops the octopus down and shoves her headphones off, mouth curling.

“What?” she demands with a scowl.

Punk scowls right back but Raccoon Eyes is *grinning* and it makes her skin crawl.

“Our Heroic Knight in white armour.” She pretends to swoon as Katsuki’s eyes dart between them, suspicious and wary at the fact that they had tracked her down to *her* roof.

“What d’ya want?” she growls.

Punk shoves her hands into the pockets of her pants. “Mineta getting expelled – we heard it was *your* doing.” There’s a challenge there, in her words, for what Katsuki isn’t entirely sure.

“He was a fucking perv,” she says, teeth baring. “Should have kicked him harder.” It’s a grumble, a spark extinguished by fingers that curls shut before she makes a new grab for her chopsticks, shoving the sausage octopus aggressively into her mouth and chewing hard.

“That’s a cute bento you got there,” Raccoon Eyes croons, leaning forward to peer closer as Katsuki narrows her eyes upon her. “You make it yourself?”

Katsuki simply glares, drawing it closer, daring them to do anything.

Punk snorts. “Come on, Ashido – lunch closes soon and I’m hungry.”

Raccoon Eyes waves goodbye, teeth glinting with her smile, and Katsuki’s instincts crawl with ill-boding.

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"I want to be with Bakugou!"

Aizawa stares at the girl who'd interrupted him, eyes unimpressed, more than one pair of surprised eyes on the pink skinned girl in the middle of the classroom, arm raised up, smile wide.

Katsuki raises her head just enough to peer at the girl from the folds of her arms, eyes narrowing.

-

"We do not need to *work together*," Katsuki denies, eyes flat. "You do your half, I do mine and you leave me the *fuck* alone."

"That's not what Aizawa-sensei said," Raccoon Eyes denies, legs kicking where she'd pulled her chair to her desk, a smug sort of smile on her lips that makes anger coil through Katsuki the longer she stares. "And you want to stay at the top of the class, *right*?" the other girls drawls. "You better make sure I do my part, it's *so very easy to forget*, you get me?"

Blackmail. Katsuki was being fucking *blackmailed*.

The papers on her desk stares mockingly back at her and she slams her palm flat upon it, cramming it into her backpack. "*Fine*," she snarls. "Library, after school."

"No," Raccoon Eyes denies, leaning forward as Katsuki levels her with a dangerous eyes. "There's this café I've been looking forward to visiting – I think it would make an excellent study space."

"A *café*–"

"My treat."

Katsuki's mouth snaps shut and Raccoon Eyes practically oozes smugness when Katsuki bares her teeth in a soundless snarl but offers no denial.

-

Raccoon Eyes makes one attempt at linking their arms but Katsuki twitches violently away from her, a *pop* from a smothered explosion stinging sweet to both their senses.

"Fine, fine – no touching," she says, throwing her hands up, a mocking sort of ease as Katsuki stiffly marches past her towards the closest exit,

already quite *done* but unwilling to compromise her streak of straight A's for *anything*.

"You really are quite volatile," the other muses beside her, golden eyes set in black scrutinizing her where she's walking backwards, somehow easily navigating through the throng of people despite it. "Not exactly the right way to make friends, you know?"

Katsuki grunts, moving stiffly past people, most giving her wide-berth.

"Where's the damn café?" she demands and Raccoon Eyes spins around, pointing triumphantly down the street to a small red sign.

-

Loathe to admit it the café is *nice*.

It's not crowded, the chatter is low and the waitress doesn't linger long past a smile after taking their order and Raccoon Eyes is humming across her.

She notices Katsuki's eyes upon her, eyebrow raising.

"Doesn't seem like your kind of place," Katsuki admits reluctantly.

They'd claimed the corner table and she's thankful to have the wall behind her, shoulders loosening just a bit as she peers about. The air smells of tea and a soft twist of sweetness from the cakes waiting to be served. The walls are decorated with pictures of cats and there are small furry creatures weaving about, one or two getting their absent scratches from groups of students cooing over them.

Raccoon Eyes flashes a knowing grin at her, tapping at her throat in mirror of her headphones. "Those aren't for music, are they?" she asks as Katsuki stiffens warily. "Jirou guessed. Knows just about anything related to music, that one. I won't tell," she says, stretching her arms up above her. "But I figured you'd like a place that wasn't too loud or crowded."

Katsuki grunts and the other's mouth softens.

"Honest though, I am pretty impressed by what you did," she admits. "The world needs more guys like you. Mineta was making more than one of us pretty damn uncomfortable and teachers are less prone to hear us girls out about it."

The part of Katsuki that had died a twenty-two-year-old woman resonates with empathy, easing something inside of her.

“s not right,” Katsuki grits out. “Should have fucking kicked him the first day.”

“Boys will be boys,” the others says with a dry twist of her mouth and Katsuki bares her teeth.

“People who say things like that-“

“*Can just fuck right off,*” the other finishes with a smirk and Katsuki gives her a flat look. “That’s what you were going to say, wasn’t it?”

Katsuki grunts, turning away to stare out the window.

“You’re just a right softie under all that anger, aren’t you?” the other says with some consideration as tea and cakes arrives – a fluffy one shaped like a smiling lion settling in front of Katsuki, a strange sort of alien in front of the other. “You know, that match against Midoriya – it didn’t really paint you in a good way, you know?”

Katsuki prods a bit of the lion off, shoving into her mouth, tasting cinnamon as she flattens her tongue up against the spoon as she pulls it out.

“We all saw it,” the other girl continues breezily. “You could have wrapped him up and left him whenever but you let him get up over and over again until he couldn’t stand.”

Katsuki gives her a flat look.

“Just saying,” the pink haired girl says with a shrug, spooning the alien’s jaw into her mouth. “It was pretty brutal to watch.”

“... Let’s just get this over with,” Katsuki says, uninterested in making excuses, shoving the cake away and grasping for pen, paper and notebook – finding the eraser after a moment of digging and slapping it all up on the small table.

“Aye, aye Bakugou-*kun!*”

Katsuki’s face makes a complicated sort of grimace.

“Just Bakugou is fine,” she grumbles.

“Then – you can call me Ashido,” the other says with a sharp grin.

-

Katsuki stares down at her phone, at the single number added other than his parents.

Raccoon Eyes is fucking *strange*.

For all that she'd threatened to pin them down with something less than an A she was sharp when she wanted to and they'd gotten into more than one argument over how to spin their presentation, loud enough that they'd been hushed *twice*.

The other never cowered and her grin was fierce as she gave as good as she got.

Katsuki was so damn used to people flinching away at the first spark on her palm but Raccoon Eyes had merely held up her own hand, covered in a strange slimy sort of shimmer, unimpressed and just ready to *fucking go at it*.

A knock on her door makes her lower her phone, his father peering inside with a soft curl of his mouth. "Did you have a good day?" Masaru asks and Katsuki grunts.

"... It was fine," she admits after a moment.

Her phone buzzes, a *ping* from an arriving message that startles them both, Masaru's eyes widening before he smiles. "That's good. Dinner in ten minutes, alright son?"

Katsuki nods, distracted by the shiny new chat box visible on her screen, unaware of the way Masaru draws a shuddering breath outside her door.

-

RACCOON EYES: i brought my own bento today!

RACCOON EYES: you're eating on the roof, right?

RACCOON EYES: gimme like, five

Katsuki stares blankly down at her phone, chopsticks half-raised to her mouth.

RACCOON EYES: and you better not think of bolting

RACCOON EYES: i know where you sleep.

Three dots pending another message.

RACCOON EYES: also, I'm bringing company

It's the only warning she gets before the door swings open and Raccoon Eyes practically bounces out, hand already raised, phone clutched tight in it, Sparky and Shitty Hair trailing behind her.

"What the hell are you doing here?" Katsuki growls out, wary eyes settling on the two boys.

"Aww, don't be like that Ba-ku-gou!" She twitches. "You can't spend every lunch alone."

"I *can*," Katsuki responds with a flat look.

"So this is where you've been hanging around?" Shitty Hair whistles. "How manly."

Katsuki's knuckles whitens and she bares her teeth only to jerk when Raccoon Eyes *thwaps* her forehead, muscles coiling as she lashes out, hand clamping down on the other's wrist before she can pull back – a squeak of surprise leaving her as she tips forward, nearly succeeding in sending herself sprawling over Katsuki who practically shoves her back.

"Whoa-" she gasps. "You were faster than I thought."

Katsuki releases her as if burnt, the feeling of flesh beneath her touch alien, and the other girl gives her a strange look when she practically shoves her hand down into her lap. "Fuck off," she growls. "I don't want-"

"I don't care," Raccoon Eyes interrupts her simply. "We're eating our lunch here now. Air is free."

Smoke starts wafting from her lunch box before she abruptly releases it, reaching for the lid only to have it sliding out of her way, mouth curling as she fixates on Sparky who is looking far too innocent.

"I'll *kill you*," Katsuki promises, voice honey smooth. "If you don't give it back in five *fucking* seconds, Sparky."

"Sparky?" the boy mouths, looking rather offended. "My *name*," he says, sliding the lid beneath him and settling with an audacious sort of

smile, “is Kaminari Denki. Which you should know by now.”

“Kirishima Eijiro!” Shitty Hair volunteers as he folds down. “You can just call me Kirishima.”

“I’m not going to call you fucking *anything*—“

“Bakugou—“ Raccoon Eyes elbows him hard, an *oof* of surprise leaving her as her mind slowly computes the motion, girl settling easily beside her, close enough that Katsuki finds herself leaning out of her way as she reaches forward to drag her bag with her, skin crawling from the close proximity. “Behave. Make friends.” Raccoon Eyes fucking waves her hand with a flourish to the two boys.

“With Shitty Hair and Sparky?” Katsuki asks flatly. “I’d rather throw myself off the *roof*.”

Shitty Hair grasps his chest dramatically. “That hurt,” he says dramatically. “Right here.”

“Want me to kiss it better?” Raccoon Eyes coos and Katsuki is *not doing this*.

She shoves the remains of her bento, without lid, into her backpack – ignoring Raccoon Eyes flustered call of her name and the other’s surprised exclamations, something dark and furious twisting through her chest as she slams the door to the roof shut behind her, hands trembling.

-

Katsuki spends the rest of the day twitchier than normal, ignoring everything, headphones over her ears, heart beating too loud inside her chest, a wet *thu-thump thu-thump* that drowns out even Present Mic during the last lesson of the day.

She’s the first up, the first to leave, a text shot to a number with a location appearing in place and then deleted, feet carrying her down long-visited paths until finally-

“Why, if it isn’t Baku-chan,” a voice mocks as she rounds the corner, clever eyes already settling upon her, and something inside of her slowly relaxes. “I thought you were off becoming a *Hero*. Too high-up in the ranks to come spend time with us anymore.”

“Fuck off,” she snaps back with far less bite than normal, Dabi already

holding out a cigarette with a raised brow, liquid amusement in his turquoise eyes.

She shoves her hand down to grab her lighter but he reaches out a finger, blue flames snagging at the tip, and she inhales, lets the smoke curl down her lungs, allows it to linger.

“Mou, you look a bit stressed there,” Freak mocks where she sits on the high-wall, eyes too bright, grin too wide. “A week into the Hero business and already stress smoking?” She clicks her tongue, legs swinging, looking cosy in a yellow sweater with too long sleeves. “Sure it’s the deal for you?”

“I’m going to be the Best,” she bites out after exhaling, lets the faux calm lull her into something less on-edge as Dabi tilts his head, a huff of air leaving him as he leans back against the brick wall.

Tall and thin, longish black hair spiking out about his head, heavy gnarled purplish scars stretching down from his mouth, staples sunk deep into his skin.

The first time Katsuki had met Dabi she’d been twelve, knuckles bleeding, nose broken, chest and back badly bruised from the group of teens that had cornered her in an attempt to *teach her a lesson*.

She’d won, barely, wrist wiping impatiently at the blood dripping over her mouth and chin to a budding pool of blood on the ground at her feet.

And he’d dropped from the fucking *roof*, looking like a deformed bat with the thick scars and lidded eyes.

Katsuki didn’t think for a second that it was coincidence she kept running into him following that – if Dabi didn’t want to be found it was impossible to track him down and he wasn’t the sort to just *hang around and wait*.

Dabi eventually picked up the Freak along the way and Katsuki had memorized the number Dabi had recited her after her acceptance to UA, wary of entering it into her phone.

“I want to hit something,” Katsuki grunts as she stamps out the cigarette.

Freak clasps her hands together, leaning forward. “Oh *please do*,” she begs, eyes glittering. “Dabi always makes you look *so pretty*.”

Dabi tilts his head and Katsuki meets the strangely pretty turquoise of his eyes.

“Quirk or no quirk?”

“What do you think, *dumbass*?” she growls, shoving her jacket off and yanking shirt and undershirt up and over her head, leaving her bare.

Blue flames lick to life as he spreads his arms out. “I am but a gentleman,” he drawls and Katsuki snarls as she launches herself towards him, explosions already burning sharp and sweet in the palm of her hands.

-

“You’ve gotten better,” Dabi tells her as he steals the cigarette from her lips, drawing deep as Katsuki gives him a flat look, snatching it back and biting down hard on the butt of it, daring him to try again.

His mouth curves.

Her skin smarts where flames had marked her deep, sure to leave new scars among the already angry crawl of pink flesh that coiled where her undershirt could still hide them and she would need to keep a careful eye on them because burns could be tricky.

But the itchy crawl beneath her skin is gone and she feels far calmer than she had since stepping her first foot inside the walls of UA, breathing out beneath the setting sun.

If she scrapes her arm or something she’s sure she can get an extra visit to Recovery Girl to clear the worst of it.

“He still lost,” Freak points out, unimpressed and pouting over the bandages wrapped in place over gaping wounds, a bottle of water helping rid of the worst of the blood splatter. She’s tracing circles in a small red puddle of Katsuki’s blood, arms loose.

“I would like to see you do better,” Katsuki grumbles.

“Hand-to-hand you’d take wackjob over here easily,” Dabi says with a roll of his shoulders. “But you’d lose to her in a knife-fight. Quirk or no quirk.”

Her jaw clenches but she does not ask about a quirk-to-quirk fight, for whatever reason Himiko Toga would not share exactly what it was she

could do.

Katsuki does not care enough to press the issue.

She drops the cigarette when the heat licks too close to her skin, twisting down on it. She'd temporarily shut off her sweat glands after the fight and washed her hands off with water but it was better to err on caution when it came to her quirk.

"I'm off," she announces brusquely.

"Make sure to call us if you want Dabi to beat you up again!" Freak calls, hands cupped around her mouth.

Katsuki gives her the finger.

Chapter End Notes

Short story about Katsuki figuring things out in a messy situation + Dabi because I think it's going to be real interesting dynamic to explore.

It's always a bit iffy with stories like this because she's of age and *not* but she's going to be sixteen before anything sexual happens so you're aware (age of consent here in Sweden). I'm not even sure how explicit I mean to make it - depends on how the story fall. I'll update the tags when I know.

Artsy-death on tumblr if you want to swing by and say hi~

Hope you enjoyed!

A Sense of Loss

Chapter Notes

Raccon Eyes = Ashido

Four Eyes/Class Rep = Iida

Punk = Jirou

Shitty Hair = Kirishima

Half-n-Half = Todoroki

Round Cheeks = Ochako

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Katsuki is starting to hate the sound of her name.

“Bakugou- are you even listening to me?” Raccoon Eyes crowds too close, ignoring the way Katsuki coils tense. “How am I supposed to apologize to you if you’re not *listening to me*?”

She stares at the bus, at Four-Eyes that she mentally slots to Class Rep when she notes the band around his arm, a nagging sort of memory of a vote ghosting past before she dismisses it entirely as he tries to make them file into a *line*.

“It’s a fucking bus,” she growls, barely resisting the urge to slam her shoulder into him as she pushes past.

“Bakugou-san,” a finger pushing up, glasses flashing, “you are ignoring the importance of-“

“I don’t *care*.”

“He *does* have a point,” Katsuki hears somewhere behind her as she passes by the surprisingly spacy seats in the middle and hauls herself up in the first seat after the door, folding her arms up on the railing in front of her and after a few minutes her skin crawls as Punk drops down beside her.

“You should thank me,” the other girl has the audacity to drawl when she notices Katsuki’s foul mood. “Iida made Ashido stay in line but she was looking real eager to join you.”

Katsuki bares her teeth but doesn’t respond, slumping deeper into her arms and glaring mulishly down at nothing as the last person files in and Aizawa-sensei droops down into one of the last seats near the

front.

-

The trip to USJ is surprisingly long – not quite that she finds herself dozing off but long enough that she gets why they took the bus when they had perfectly workable legs and a teacher who enjoyed driving them to the ground.

Katsuki entertains the picture of Aizawa-sensei on a small pink scooter at the front of the pack, class heaving and struggling to keep up...

Snorts quietly to herself, slanting a look to the side when Deku stammers out loudly, arms waving in front of him.

“They’re nothing alike!” he denies frantically. “All Might is... All Might! And I keep... I keep breaking my bones.” He practically wilts on himself as Froggy tilts her head, finger at her lip. “It’s – we’re really nothing alike.” Red faced, nervous, *incredibly bad liar*.

But what is he lying about? Her brow creases momentarily before she decides that she doesn’t *care* and turns her gaze to the nearing stadium-like building, anticipation curling low in her gut.

-

One moment she’s rearing back to slam her foot into the brimstone-smelling Villain and the next she’s in a roll, coming up with her hands slamming into the face of a low-ranking cockroach, skin fizzling as she burns off a hard explosion that sends him careening back with half the skin on his face missing, unconscious before he hit the ground.

She spits a wad of saliva at his crotch, categorizing the situation with coiled fists as Shitty Hair drops an unconscious one down beside her, eyebrows creased. “We better finish this off quick,” he says in an undertone, skin mottling strangely, almost like some sort of living rock, as he spies about the gathering of Villains watching them with wariness. “And then help the rest.”

Katsuki bares her teeth.

“You do that.” She lets sweat bead thick in her palms, feels the acrid sweetness of her quirk stinging her nose. “I’m taking out the Fog Bastard.”

She is surprised when – instead of fighting her on it he gives her

words some consideration.

“You’re right,” Shitty Hair says breathing out, mouth stretching into a grin as he pushes his fist against his palm. “Let’s put our faith in our classmates and get this over with!”

She scoffs, anger and anticipation alike in her chest as she fixates on the closest enemy.

-

Katsuki thinks that, for just a moment, there’s a strange hollowness to the form of All Might – visible through the smoke before a wall rises sharp and tall between them and she twitches away from Shitty Hair who had reached out to put a hand on her shoulder.

She turns away.

It’s none of her business anyway.

-

The USJ incident leaves Aizawa-sensei with arms wrapped up and a scar by his eye and there’s a significant increase in security that means full-body scanning and new student IDs.

“It’s hard to digest it, you know?” Raccoon Eyes says from where she’s perched across her, completely ignoring the foul glare Katsuki has levelled upon her, bento precariously balanced on a knee. “I mean – what was the point of it? In the end All Might won because he’s... you know... All Might.”

Katsuki shoves a grape into her mouth, biting down hard and with relish, firmly ignoring her.

Raccoon Eyes slants a considering look her way. “You’re going to have to talk to me eventually,” she points out. “Whether during lesson or out in the field – there’s no way you can ignore me forever.”

Try me, Katsuki thinks fiercely.

“I thought we had a thing going,” Raccoon Eyes sighs, mock-mournfully. “Building rapport, learning the ins and outs of each other, becoming *buds*. You were *fine* with me and what kind of person would I be if I didn’t want my explosive friend to get along with my other friends, *hm?*”

We're not friends, Katsuki thinks and her jaw aches as she strains not to express it verbally. *I don't have friends.*

I don't need friends.

-

There's a blinking address when she gets off from school two days later which makes her hesitate – thumb tracing over the unsaved number with a faint crease in her brow.

A ding.

XXX-XXXXXX-XX: Or are you too high-and-mighty to spend some time with me?

The mocking text stares at her for a full minute before she snorts and shoves the phone down her pocket after deleting it.

-

It's a strange place – a bit off but still central enough that she's drawn up against a wall near a sign that makes people veer around her and it both, one hand absently tracing around the shell of one of her headphones, tracking people with a frown as she waits for the familiar stretch of purple scars only-

He's covered them up, of course, and Katsuki raises a brow at the thick purple scarf, the shade near exact the colour of his scars, wrapped about enough times to challenge Aizawa-sensei's capture weapon, a cap shoved low and a slouchy sort of appearance that echoes closer to Katsuki's own style.

It begged the question as to *why* he felt like he needed to cover up and it raised questions about *why* he'd called Katsuki out if it wasn't to *fight*.

And why the *fuck* she'd agreed to it.

Dabi drags his eyes up from her shoes to her eyes, a considering *hmm* where'd he'd paused in front of her, looming with his considerable height even with his back curved, one hand reaching out to brush against the mottled yellow bruise on her cheek as her jaw clenches at the contact.

"Seems they didn't get you too bad," Dabi muses, beckoning her

along, as if she was some kind of *dog-*

But, Katsuki realises, as she takes a step forward to follow, there's no real anger just a flare of annoyance because Dabi was a fucking asshole who did as he wanted and she *knew that*.

"Where are we going?" she bites out, finding herself a step closer to Dabi than was reasonable to avoid a tall, broad and muscular man with bandana storming past. "And why the fuck are you looking like that? Trying to copy my style now?" She slouches back out of his personal bubble.

"Patience, Baku-chan." She twitches. "Now, I have an important question for you." He comes to a halt, hand disappearing down his pocket, and she can just see the way the corner of his mouth hitches up over the edge of his scarf. "Vanilla or chocolate?"

-

Katsuki stares down at the ice cream in her hand, at the white swirls with a sprinkle of colourful marshmallows that tilt precariously.

Beside her Dabi has abandoned his cap and tugged down the scarf, tongue dragging with a long curve around his vanilla ice cream before disappearing into his mouth with a flick against the tip of it.

She takes a hesitant bite, nose crinkling before she relaxes with a small huff.

"Please tell me you didn't call me out for *ice cream*," Katsuki says as she bites through the shell of the cone, fingers already sticky where the force of her first bite had blown the bottom of it, dripping awkwardly from her fingers despite her best effort.

"Would you prefer it if I called you out to beat you to an inch of your life?" Dabi wonders and Katsuki's brow furrows at the look in his eyes – a strange sort of thing that she can't quite place.

"I would blow you the fuck up first," she promises him and Dabi snorts, shoulders easing as he tilts his head up to the sky.

"How long has it been since we first met?"

Katsuki stares at him, takes another bite of her ice cream, eyes drifting to her feet.

She'd been twelve when they first met and in just a month she would be turning sixteen and thirty alike in merged lives.

It's meetings that comes and goes depending on her expulsions from schools, moving twice during the years of their acquaintance, Dabi eventually turning up to bother her one way or the other.

He was a strange constant in her life, one of the few, reliable in a way that should have been concerning.

"Four years," she offers after a brief moment. "Why? Feeling *nostalgic*?"

"You're such a brat," Dabi scoffs but there's... something about his tone that makes Katsuki's shoulders tense, wary and not quite understanding. "Messy too," he says, observing as she flicks the last bit of the cone into her mouth, biting down just as he reaches for her hand, ignoring the way she curls up with tension as he raises her palm up, thumb pressing flat against the inside of her wrist.

And then her eyes goes wide for he bends down, tongue flattening against her palm, dragging up and over her finger, curving to get drop of white on her knuckle—

Katsuki snatches her hand back from his grip, red spreading across her cheeks as she draws back from him, a sly sort of look in his eyes that makes something strange knot up in her chest as he drops his hand, not looking particularly bothered at all with what he'd done.

"You need to learn caution, *Baku-chan*," Dabi drawls, unwrapping his scarf and threading it around her neck, too close as he leans forward to get it around her, his breath a strange mix of sulphur and sweetness. "Who knows what kind of people are out there, looking to use you." His strange turquoise fixes upon her with a warning that sends a shiver up her back.

And then he's ruffling her hair and she watches him leave, a wet *thump thump* in her chest, hand grasping at the fabric around her neck.

"The fuck!?" Katsuki bursts out in the remaining silence.

-

The Sport Festival approaches and between normal classes, Hero Training and preparations for it she ends up cleaning up the last of

Dagobah Beach, a strange feeling settling in her chest as she stares out at it, feet bare, water dripping from her hair and down her body.

Somewhere about seagulls cries out and she drops down, sand immediately gluing itself to her boxers, and she knows she's going to regret it later when she attempts to wrestle herself back into her shorts but she can't get herself to care.

What now?

She breathes out, in. Feels the way her ribs expands as her lungs fills with air and the itch of a cigarette brings her mind to turquoise eyes and she feels her cheeks colouring, glaring down at her toes, burying them into the sand with a frustrated exhalation.

-

Sometimes Katsuki dreams of an apple orchard, feels the dirt on her palm, beneath her knees, a hand ghosting up her spine and a mouth tilting to meet her own beneath the warm sun.

She wakes up with screams choked down and tears on her face.

-

"I'm going to be the Best," she tells the world with relish, tasting the absolute faith of the six-year-old boy that had been, ignoring the way her class groans behind her, ignores the way eyes narrow upon her back.

There's a heady feeling, a warmth and weight of a promise made almost eight years ago when she woke up in a hospital bed in a body not her own.

-

The Sports Festival leaves her with a strange feeling inside her chest, gaze fixated on Deku who is staring up with wide startled eyes, as if unable to believe the way his name rises with exited cries in the stands around them at the end of the first task.

Katsuki gnashes her teeth together and beside her Half-n-Half crosses his arms, just shy of catching his breath, sweat dripping down one side of his face.

It's not unlike the way Dabi doesn't sweat when his quirk is in use on

some level and she realises she's been staring when the other turns towards her, eyebrow rising coolly, and *one of his eyes are-*

"I'm going to win this," she snarls at him with a temper that flares hot and hard. "So don't get in my fucking way."

"So far neither of us are in the lead," the other says flatly, completely unmoved, and the reaction makes her cheeks colour before she catches herself – something strange twisting up in her chest as she turns away and marshes into the arena.

Fucking Half-n-Half.

Fucking *Dabi*.

-

Fucking *Deku* she's going to *fucking kill him-*

-

Round Cheeks gives as good as she gets and Katsuki finds herself out of breath, panting and staring down at the other girl who had, *finally*, fainted – unable to move where she lies sprawled out, muscles and quirks strained to their max.

She's aware of the way civilians and pro-Heroes alike are judging her in the stands and her face twists up before she breathes out and sets her face in a scowl.

What did gender have to do with competence? Nothing. Round Cheeks did *good*. Better than most would have against her. Other than Dabi and Deku there were few who stuck around to go head-on with her once explosions starting going off in her palms.

No one would have said anything had Round Cheeks been a boy.

She shoves her hands into the pockets of her training uniform and turns on her heel as she marches out.

-

It's not *Right*.

Humiliation burns sick and heavy through her gut – chained and muzzled like a dog, her temper and feelings disregarded and panic so thick inside of her that only mounting anger overcomes it and she

clings to it desperately with thousands of eyes upon her, future colleagues and civilians alike looking down at her as she struggles against the metal clasped around her wrists and mouth.

Why?

Laughter, sighs of exasperation, side-eyes and judgement.

She fights against nausea, against the burn of her eyes and a desperate wretched sort of horror, feeling terribly small in too big world as metal bites into her flesh, the medal heavy on her chest where All Might had forced it over her head.

WHY?

-

She tears away from Midnight, ignores the strange fuzziness of the world around her as she pushes into the boy's bathroom and locks the door shut behind her before collapsing down on her knees and heaving into the toiled, shaking and pressing her hands flat against her ears as she squeezes her eyes shut.

Craves silence and darkness as she shivers and her hands trembles and sickly sweetness stings her nose, palms slick with sweat.

She remains there for a long time, until the world has once again settled around her and all she's left with is tired apathy and a strange sense of loss.

-

RACCOON EYES: Are you OK?

Katsuki stares at the message, curled up beside her bed, back against the bedside table, ignoring the way handles presses uncomfortably into her back.

RACCOON EYES: i tried to find you afterwards but you kinda disappeared.

RACCOON EYES: not that I blame you.

Three dots stare back at her for a long time.

RACCOON EYES: want to head to the cat café with me on monday?

-

XXX-XXXXX-XX: Congratulations to a shitty win.

The phone explodes in her hand and she throws it against the door with a wordless snarl.

-

His parents make her favourite food and Katsuki draws her knees up to her chest where she sits at the end of the couch, tense and uncomfortable and scowling at the pictures on the television screen, headphones firmly in place.

She hasn't taken them off since arriving home after the Sports Festival.

Mitsuki had attempted to gently cuff her earlier that day and she's flinched back to violently she'd smacked her head into the wall and she'd done a sloppy work of wrapping it up, aware of their eyes upon her, aware of the way they see the trembles in her fingers, the way she's coiled so tight that she doesn't know what to do with herself.

She buries her face into her knees, elbows drawn tight over her face, humiliation so thick inside of her that she hadn't been able to sleep, wretched and absolutely exhausted.

The sneers, the jeers, the laughter of hundreds at the sight of her-

Masaru gently settles a blanket over her shoulder, a tense look exchanged with his wife when his son only curls tighter upon himself.

-

"I'm coming with you to school today," his mother says Monday morning and Katsuki pauses, oatmeal half-way raised to her mouth as she looks up.

Takes in the sharp, crisp business suit and the way Mitsuki is clearly gearing up for war in the clack of her sharp heels.

"You don't have to take the train – we're taking the car. I'll even come pick you up after, if you want." It's an offer made breezily, an underlying tension in the way red eyes focus upon her – a slight scowl on the woman's face. "I'm just going to have a quick chat with your Principal."

Mitsuki smoothers down the crisp white blouse and Katsuki really

doesn't envy Nedzu one bit.

"... I'm meeting Ashido after school," she says after a moment, the name strange in her mouth and an unfamiliar warmth in her chest as she watches the woman shove two bars down her purse along with a bottle of water. "We're heading to a cat café," she tacks on when both his parents pause to look at her in surprise.

"Sounds wonderful," Masaru says with a gentle smile and Katsuki ducks her head, shoving a good helping of oatmeal mixed with applesauce into her mouth.

-

His mother escorts her all the way to the classroom, a click-clack of sharp heels as they head down the empty corridor, and her classmates looks up in surprise when the woman pushes the door open, halting Aizawa-sensei mid-word as she gently pushes her inside, a cursory glance darting over the some-eighteen heads already gathered inside before fixating on their teacher who slowly straightens up from his cursory slump.

Mitsuki glances back down at Katsuki who blinks and stiffens in slight surprise when lips presses a kiss to her forehead, hand rising to rub absently at it with a frown.

"You must be Aizawa-san," Mitsuki says briskly as she straightens out. "I'm looking forward to our talk later this afternoon."

Aizawa looks rather like he does anything *but* look forward to it and Katsuki shoves her hands low in her pockets as she ambles down the line and collapsed into her seat with a scowl.

"A pleasure," the man says and Mitsuki gives him a firm onceover before nodding sharply, door clicking shut behind her as she leaves.

Katsuki ignores the curious eyes, dragging her headphones up and over her head as she sinks into her seat and focuses on the movement of Aizawa's lips as he picks the lesson back up, making no mention of her tardiness as he drones on about the lesson for the day.

-

Raccoon Eyes is clearly brimming with curiosity when she bounces up on the roof but there's also something careful in her eyes – in the way she pauses to regard Katsuki, as if making a mental judgement on just

how much she'd be able to push.

"So, that was your Mom, huh?" she says, folding down after shrugging off her backpack which drops to the ground beside her.

She keeps her mouth clear in Katsuki's vision even as she digs through her backpack in search of her bento box.

"What about it?" she asks, voice strangely muffled with the headphones over her ears, making it hard to judge just how loud she was talking but not quite caring.

She wishes she could turn off the world completely. Wishes she'd never have heard the jeers of the crowd gazing down upon her-

Katsuki blinks as an octopus sausage with a lopsided grin and ill-matched eyes drops into her bento box, raising her head to gaze at the other.

"You like them, right?" Raccoon Eyes says with a raised brow. "It's my first try so be kind to it!" She points dramatically with her chopsticks and Katsuki draws tight before remembering herself and snorts as she gazes back down at the happily grinning thing.

"You look a lot like your Mom, you know?" Raccoon Eyes says with her mouthful. "Same hair, same eyes. I don't really look anything like my parents – quirk kicked in, made me pink and, well, *this*." She flicks one yellow antenna on her head, mouth chomping down on piece of vegetable omelette the second she'd finished talking. Chews. Swallows. "Kinda nifty though – my Hero name is going to be *Alien Queen*." Her eyes glitters when she says it. "You know what you're going to call yourself yet?" she asks, popping a greasy fried shrimp into her mouth and twisting the tail off, dropping it aside.

Katsuki frowns, biting down on an eggroll.

Hero name? The boy had idealised names like *King Explosion Murder* and she'd snorted quietly to herself when reading through those carefully saved drawings kept at her bedside table.

Her Hero uniform is kinda inspired by those drawings – the black muscle shirt with the orange X, the idealized grenade cannons foregone for optimal movement while keeping the heavy boots over thick heavy-duty pants.

But the name...

She chews thoughtfully, nudging back one headphone just enough to follow along Raccoon Eyes chatter as she thinks.

-

BAKUGOU: I need to decide on a fucking Hero name.

XXX-XXXXXX-XX: What kind of number is this.

XXX-XXXXXX-XX: Did you blow up your phone?

XXX-XXXXXX-XX: Dumbass.

XXX-XXXXXX-XX: You explode. Make it something explode-y.

Three hours passes before three dots once again appear on the screen and a *ding* rings through the room with a faint buzz in the hands of the sleeping teen, screen lightening up the room in blue.

XXX-XXXXXX-XX: I'm partial to Ground Zero if you're taking suggestions.

-

The prospect of doing an Internship *gnaws*.

3, 556 – that's how many invitations she'd gotten and the more she stares at the number the more ugly the feeling inside of her chest grows.

How many of these had looked upon her and laughed? How many of them saw a pet project that needed to be put in line? *How many-*

She doesn't know. She doesn't like it. Katsuki is fucking *angry*.

She rips the top of the list off and burns the rest to ash in her palm, letting the wind sweep it with until she's left with the sting of achy sweetness in her nose and a list of some ten names.

The best of the best, the Heroes at the top of the line, people who were supposed to be *good*.

One of you, Katsuki thinks just a tad desperately and with a frail sort of hope that doesn't belong in a world that lets her down over and over again.

Chapter End Notes

Look at that, I managed to squeeze in two arcs here! It was really needed to balance out some future content and I'm pretty happy with how it turned out.

Tbh, I was really iffy about how the Sports Festival was handled in canon even if I get it because it's entertainment media and not exactly meant to be taken seriously but I can't just disregard how twisted it was to chain up a fifteen-year-old boy in front of all his future colleagues.

But, maybe that's just me.

Artsy-death on tumblr! It's an entirely spoiler-free zone from Endgame is you have such concerns (I know I had such concerns until yesterday).

Hope you enjoyed!

Dissonance

Chapter Notes

Raccoon Eyes = Ashido

Class Rep = Iida

Punk = Jirou

Sparky = Kaminari

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Katsuki stares a bit blankly as the new student is introduced to the class.

The part of her that died a twenty-two-year-old horror game enthusiasm can't resist slotting him as Purple Guy, eyes drifting briefly over the wild hair, the dark shadows beneath his eyes and the wary flat look with a challenge written in the depth of it.

There'd been a glaring hole in team-ups following the runt's expulsion and Katsuki figures there'd only been a matter of time before someone had to step up and fill it.

Mind control, she thinks with a slight furrow in her brow, remembering the match faintly – the way he'd nearly made Deku walk right out of the ring.

She can't quite decide what to feel about that sort of power when she has the capacity to blow someone up with a spark in her palm.

-

Aizawa halts her at the end of the day and Katsuki slumps back against Class Rep's desk, hands shoved into her pockets, waiting as her classmates trail out amidst chatter and a curious look or two.

"I'll wait for you!" Raccoon Eyes promises with a friendly buff of her shoulder that is painstakingly telegraphed to a flat look from Katsuki.

But she doesn't protest and the other girl grins as she shoulders her backpack properly, the last to leave, Punk and Sparky both waiting for her just outside the classroom and the door closes, leaving Katsuki alone with their teacher.

Aizawa is taller than her – wired beneath the bagginess of his shirt

and pants, his hair messy, the bags beneath his eyes unusually heavy as he lets out a sigh and drags his fingers through the dark strands.

“Your mother had concerns about you in the aftermath of the Sports Festival,” the man says carefully, eyes upon stiffening shoulders. “I won’t push,” he says. “But I am here if you need to talk. My number one priority is your safety and health.”

Where were you when metal bit into my hands and mouth? Katsuki wonders. Where were you when the world was laughing at the sight of me chained and muzzled like an animal because I dared to raise my voice in protest?

Dabi’s scarf is wrapped tight around her, hiding the bruises at her jaw, and she doesn’t answer him, finally released with another tired sigh and a phone number pressed into her palm.

She only just resists slamming the door shut behind her.

-

“We should head to the mall,” Raccoon Eyes muses beside her. “I need to pick up some extra training shirts for the Internship, my quirk keeps eating through them.”

“Oh!” Sparky perks up where he’s walking along with Punk on the other side of Raccoon Eyes. “I need new shoes.” He lifts his foot demonstratively and the lower half of it flops sadly down, revealing the underside of his foot before he placed it back on the ground. “I kicked the goal post during soccer yesterday,” he admits proudly. “Completely split it down and broke two of my toes but Recovery Girl took care of it this morning!” He folds his arms behind his head, grinning.

“You’re lucky we didn’t have Hero Training today,” Raccoon Eyes says with some amusement.

Sparky shudders. “I can just *hear* the lecture. Already got one from both my moms, don’t need a third one.”

“I’ll tag along,” Punk says with a little stretch. “The new Hero Magazine comes out today.”

“What about you, Bakugou?” Raccoon Eyes asks, turning hopeful eyes upon her. “Need anything for the Internship?”

Katsuki doesn't understand Raccoon Eyes. Doesn't understand why she keeps pushing and hoping when the rest of the world takes one look at her and two steps back.

She reaches up to grasp at the scarf with a scowl.

"... Shirts," she admits grudgingly, looking away when Raccoon Eyes lightens up, grinning.

-

"Ah- this one, this one!" Raccoon Eyes practically shoves the shirt into her face, eyes wide and expectant as Katsuki studied the drawing of a bunny that, when tilted to the side, became a duck, white lines against black.

"s not awful," she agrees and the other practically *shines* as she throws it into the basket before swanning away to search for more.

There's a strange sort of lull to her thoughts, familiarity in actions, the chatter and wild energy of the other strangely soothing to the jagged spikes of her mind and she finds herself reluctantly *enjoying* the whole thing.

Punk is in the store music store two doors with Sparky who'd volunteered as company and her eyes track Raccoon Eyes as she browses over a section of sleeveless shirts in mottled camo.

Katsuki stuffs one hand absently into her pants pocket, the other arm threaded through the basket handles.

She'd only meant to pick up a shirt or two but when she'd messaged Mitsuki to ask for the money she'd gotten a text back to treat her *friends* to ice cream and a ding of a message from her bank informing her that there was now enough for some ten shirts and more on her account.

Friend.

The word echoes strangely to her because Katsuki doesn't have friends. Doesn't *need* friends.

Katsuki's eyes pauses on a purple shirt with a raccoon in training gear, a heavy bar grasped in tiny paws, *GYM TRASH* scrawled beneath it, and there's a strange sort of twist inside her chest the longer she stares at it.

Are you OK?

Raccoon Eyes had been the only one to ask that outside his parents since she'd woken up in this world – a genuine sort of inquiry in the aftermath of the Sports Festival. The only one in the stadium among Heroes and Heroes-to-be to pause and see something wrong in the bite of metal encircling her wrists and face.

Even her classmates gossiped and laughed behind her back.

It was really funny – best part of the entire Sports Festival!

Did you see how mad Bakugou got? He was practically spitting fire!

And then strangers.

If you don't quiet down maybe I'll take a hint from All Might himself and muzzle you up!

Oh – you're that boy that-

Laughter.

Are you OK?

Katsuki grabs at it, nearly yanks it off its hanger, and she takes a step towards the other – tongue twisting up in her mouth when golden eyes in a spread of black turns towards her, surprise blossoming up in them when Katsuki practically shoves it into her hands.

“This one,” she gets out, voice suddenly too loud even with the backdrop of music, and she hides the sudden tremble of her hand by shoving it firmly back into her pocket.

Raccoon Eyes slowly lifts it up, blinking at the pattern.

-

And if there's a strange sort of warmth in her chest when the other puts it on and refuses to take it off, even after dropping ice cream onto it and flailing for paper and water, that's nobody's business but her own.

-

XXX-XXXXXX-XX: Want to meet up?

Katsuki spends a long time staring at the message, remembering the press of a tongue against her palm, the leery amusement and the warning before Dabi had left her just like that.

Stuffs the phone beneath her pillow and squeezes her eyes shut.

-

"K-Kacchan."

She pauses, glancing over at Deku who is one of the last people lingering at the station, most of the class trailing off to their respective trains, Aizawa-sensei close enough to listen in while pretending very much like he wasn't with a squeeze-tube of some sort of fruit mash clenched in his corner teeth.

"Good luck!" Deku squeaks out, looking like he wholly and truly meant it. "I hope – I hope we learn a lot, both of us, and that, in the future – I would like to fight you, properly." He swallows. "I'm still figuring out. My quirk. That is. But – I'm gonna become strong and then – I'll challenge you." A breath out, determination flooding green eyes. "Will you accept it? When the time comes?"

Deku dares- remnants of a boy inside of her hisses but.

She stares at him – at the earnestness in his eyes and the way he's growing, overcoming and rising to challenge the rest of the class, a hand reaching out for her. Waiting.

If we didn't move, Katsuki thinks to herself, *if the boy and woman hadn't died to become me then what would they have been? Rivals or the Best of Friends?*

For – there's a part of the boy that still that looks back and expects the company of a boy with moss-green hair and a stubborn never-give-up attitude. A childhood memory of a promise before discoveries were made and one of them found himself greater than the other.

Quirks and Quirklessness – as if it *mattered*.

Genetics and chance, there were little else to it.

Katsuki feels her mouth curling, a *tch* as she twists on her heel and marches to her train, feeling the weight of the bag on her back, her Hero costume which she now had a name and identity assigned to in the briefcase heavy in her hand.

I'm going to become the Best, she thinks as she shoves them up above her and collapses into her seat.

But even so, there's a part of her that struggles to shake the image of the last match between Half-n-Half and Deku, the bitter disappointment of her win and the heavy humiliation following it.

I'm going to become the Best, she clings to the words even as she stares out at the word gliding into motion outside the window. *Anything else is unacceptable.*

-

A movement, a body slumping down opposite her, makes her narrow her eyes upon Purple Guy who is looking about as enthused about the trip as she feels.

"So, I guess we're classmates now?" he drawls when he notices her eyes upon him, a look she doesn't quite understand, her mouth curling down in response.

Drags her headphones up over her ears and looks down at her book.

-

"And practically neighbours," he adds hours later, staring at her from the door just a step down from her own, keycard slipping over the apparatus on the side with a *beep* and a slow lift of his lips when Katsuki practically slams the door shut behind her.

-

"To be honest, I'm not a big fan of yours." Those are the first words out of Best Jeanist mouth and Katsuki feels something cold slither down her spine, eyes somewhere at her feet. "And I imagine the only reason you chose my agency is because I'm one of the top five most favourite heroes."

Tall and slim and decked out in an outfit that cannot be described as anything but *jeans for miles*, hair carefully and artfully styled aside.

"You're the one who drafted me," Katsuki returns carefully as she flexes numbing fingers at her sides.

"Yes," Best Jeanist agrees, leaning back against his desk, green eyes sharp upon her. "Because all I've had lately are little do-gooders." The

world is turning strangely dull around her. “You are the first one in a long time who is a bit more ferocious. And my job, as a Hero, is reforming people like you.”

People like you.

-

Katsuki stares at the door to her hotel room some hours later for a long time before turning on her heel and disappearing down and out into the street, past Purple Guy who pauses to look after her with a slight furrow in his brow.

-

BAKUGOU: You know any good places to drink in the middle of Tokyo?

XXX-XXXXXX-XX: I thought you were out Hero interning.

XXX-XXXXXX-XX: Naughty.

Three dots for a long moment.

XXX-XXXXXX-XX: Do you want company?

The next message is just a new number and Katsuki stares at it before hesitantly shooting of a message and almost immediately there appeared a link for a GPS-shared location with a bright blinking red dot.

-

“Don’t you look miserable,” Freak greets her as she pulls the door open and Katsuki glances inside in vague surprise. “You’re lucky – Dabi keeps the good stuff at this place but it’s been awhile since any of us were around here.” The door is kicked close behind her.

It’s a small place – made and kept simple for two to crash. A mattress on the floor, a single couch in front of a small television with a low table and there’s piles of magazines and books crowding about. There’s a cheap gaming station, picture paused on the screen, and Freak has a big pair of bright green headphones dangling around her neck.

There’s fast food boxes and bags crowding about and a tall mug with a half-eaten stir-fry beside it on the low table.

“There’s food in the fridge and alcohol in the corner cupboard.” Freak waves vaguely, dropping back onto the couch and drawing up her legs.

Hair loose and still damp from a shower and wearing nothing but a large hoodie that ended somewhere mid-thigh. Katsuki’s eyes linger for a moment on the other girl – struggling to merge preconceived notions of her with what she was looking at.

She’d half-expected jars of blood with the way the other fixated near dreamily at the liquid. Instead there were old stains and scratches and the occasional hole.

Over the television is poster with three knives sticking out of it and *that*, at least, was within the frames of expectancy.

She finds a bottle of whiskey in the cupboard pointed out – stealing along a bar of chocolate she finds in the near-empty fridge and, after a moment of hesitation, sinks down on the couch beside the other and it is small enough that only inches remain between them.

“Dabi keeps some sweats and hoodies in the box there if you want to change,” Freak offers, surprisingly amenably, and Katsuki feels a quiver running through her body, blinking a bit fuzzily at the screen before slowly reaching to get the muscle shirt over her head, dropping it with a *clank* of metal to the ground.

It takes her three tries to get the belt unmade, button undone and she doesn’t bother with the zipper, pushing it all down to her knees before dropping back to the couch cushion to unlace her boots and wrestle it all down and off her.

Breathes out.

“You don’t really look all that good, you know?” Freak comments with a roll of her shoulder as Katsuki looks up, stilling in place as knees knocks against her own, a body bending down far too close as her muscles coiled up tight.

She hadn’t even noticed her leave the couch.

A hand presses down flat against her chest over a large stretch of a pink burn scar, legs shifting and thighs settling down on either side of hers in a soft and far too intimate straddle, the hoodie rucking up pale thighs, the weight of her and the feel of her skin strange.

"I saw you," Freak breathes. "Chained up and muzzled like an *animal*." Her fingers ghost over her shoulder and down her arm to her wrist, circling around the scar left after the bite of the metal that had dug deep in her struggles. "Blood." The other girl lifts her hand up and pressed it against her cheek in a soft nuzzle. "I saw that look in your eye." Knowing eyes bore into hers. "You were *afraid*. Of the *Heroes*. And wasn't that just a reality check of the ages."

Freak's eyes practically glitter.

"I'm – going to become the *Best*," Katsuki rasps, feeling strange and exposed under the touch and attention of the other, reaching for anger but grasping at nothing. She just felt empty and tired after the day and the buzz of her thoughts left her feeling distant even from her body.

Freak tilts her head and then she lets out a little sigh, dropping Katsuki's arm and instead pressing forward, arms sliding around her neck and chest pushing up against her own, the swell of her breasts echoing strange to her mind against the flatness of her own.

"The world is going to tear you apart," she whispers into her ear. "But at least you're going to break oh so *prettily*."

-

Katsuki wakes with a little jerk, stilling in place as she struggles to re-orientate herself, phone buzzing insistently in her pocket with her morning alarm until she manages to fish it out and shut it off.

The first thing that registers is the *warmth* and she stiffens when she recognises the press of a body against her own, chest rising and falling softly, control still in her lap, the game character shifting and moving her hands occasionally, left in the middle of a wreckage.

A glance at her phone informs her that she needs to be at the Pro-Hero Agency in some two hours.

Katsuki doesn't like to be touched – it makes her skin crawl, makes everything *too real* in a world that felt like a bad hallucination on a good day.

And yet there's something inside of her that hesitates to move away even as she carefully extracts herself, reaching out momentarily to steady the other, a strange feeling in her chest as she carefully draws back and made her way to the bathroom in search of some painkillers to soothe the slight headache that came with drinking, even in some

moderation, on an empty belly.

She'd spent the evening listening to the click-clack of buttons and the soft breathing beside her, watching blood splatter violently on the screen, slowly lulled into a strange sort of sleep, tongue heavy with the taste of smoky alcohol and smooth chocolate, head tipping to rest on a soft shoulder.

She stares at herself in the mirror and grimaces at the sight of her flat hair and the dark smudges beneath her eyes.

She takes a shower, taking care to scrub her hair free of stiff products with something that smells of apples, and after a bit of rummaging finds a hoodie and a pair of sweatpants to go with it and shoves her feet into a pair of too big boots she finds at the door before dodging down to the corner store she'd passed by on the way there.

Picks up some egg and bacon and enough ingredients to make pancakes, splurging on fresh blueberries and only just remembering to grab a bottle of juice.

Fr-

Toga is still sleeping when she arrives back and Katsuki turns the small plastic radio she finds on low as she starts frying up the first pancake.

-

"Why are you going back if you hate it?" Toga asks around a mouthful of pancakes an hour later, shockingly sharp in the morning, legs tucked up beneath her on the couch, and Katsuki severely doubts she'd slept more than four hours at most, bags beneath her eyes smudged grey. "If I were you I would just –" She mimes hands pushing together and then spreading out in what was clearly meant to symbolise an explosion.

Toga's hair is pulled up in the style she's more used to seeing her in and the softness is nearly completely erased by the sharpness of her eerie eyes and the stretch of her mouth, a fang just peeking forth.

"Don't have a choice," Katsuki grunts as she laces up her boots. "And it's just a week." She straightens out her muscle shirt, X bright and sharp against the black.

"You Heroes are all about doing things because you *have to*." Toga's eyes lid in a flat sort of look. "Where's the fun in that?" Her face

rearranges into a pout. “I’m leaving in two days, are you *really* going to pick a Hero over spending some extra time with me?” It’s clearly teasing and Katsuki suspects that if the other had a tail it would have been curling like a cat stalking prey.

Katsuki gives her a flat look.

Toga’s grin grows but she eases back, elbow coming up to lean against the back of the couch and a knife appearing between her fingers. “You can always stab them,” she suggests with an enticing little waggle of the metal. “Teach them not to touch without asking. Just one little poke and they’ll think twice, I promise.”

Katsuki stares at it and Toga’s eyes slowly brightens when she doesn’t immediately say *no*, abandoning breakfast as she bounces up and kneels down in front of her. “It’s easy to disguise,” Toga says eagerly, clever fingers unlacing her boots and tugging at the flap. “You keep your boots high which means you can either secure it here-“ She lines out the inside of the flap, measuring the knife against it. “I prefer to keep them at the side though – easier to grasp in the middle of a fight.”

“I’m not about to stab Japans Number Four Pro-Hero,” Katsuki comments wryly, watching her with a slight dip of her brow.

“Then stab someone else,” Toga says, uncaringly, sliding the knife into a sheath and stuffing it down her boot with a sloppy bow of the laces and a little pat before she straightens up and drops her rump onto the couch arm, grin sharp. “Never hurts to keep one close. That teacher of yours? He can cancel quirks, right? It’s called having a *back-up plan*. You never know when a knife might come in handy.”

And the part of her that died twenty-two-years-old and the victim of violent crime really have no words to offer in protest to that.

Toga throws a package of cigarettes at her before she leaves, the clover on the front a welcome promise as she squints up at the tall building of the Number Four Hero in the distance, a sick curl in her belly and a twist of her mouth but– strangely reassured by the metal at her ankle.

-

It is a surprisingly fine thing, Katsuki realises later as she’s securing the knife sheath to the inside of her boot as per the instructions and pic-by-pic *how to* that had spammed her phone for the last hour of her

patrol with Best Jeanist.

The blade is shining, carefully polished and well-cared for in its own way. There's a little lucky clover carved near the handle, so fine that she didn't notice until she tilted it *just so*, the handle dark and leathery – firm and reliable when she carefully wraps her hand around it.

She sends a picture of the knife along side-by-side with her boot where the sheath was now firmly in place and gets a bunch of hearts back, mouth curling slowly up.

“Toga.” She tastes the name carefully. “Dabi.” That one, at least, is familiar.

The entire day had just been a mess and there's a lidded sort of exhaustion clinging to her after hours of being berated for the way she stood, the way she breathed, the way she handled things, the way she talked, *the way she-*

Best Jeanist looks at her and he sees nothing more than something that needed to be *fixed*.

It wasn't unlike the way both doctors and therapists had handled her over the years. Grasping and making excuses with meds that were supposed to make things right but *didn't* because she was no *fixing her*.

We're both dead, this is the fundamental basis that makes up Bakugou Katsuki.

There was no way to undo that – her very existence was a fraud, a twenty-two-year-old dead woman and a six-year-old dead little boy crammed together in a too small body and what remained was just bits and pieces she struggled to keep together.

And– *she's doing the best she can*. It's not-

Katsuki feels something wet hit the back of her hand before she scrubs furiously at her eyes, fingers dragging through her damp hair and forehead pressing against the knees she draws up to her chest.

“Fuck.” She stares down at the wooden floor of the hotel room. “Fucking *Best Jeanist*.” It feels good to say it, cathartic almost as she focuses on her breathing and the wet *thu-thump thu-thump* of her heart.

Dead but – somehow alive.

She eases her muscles and sprawls out on her back, squinting at the ceiling lamp and wearing nothing but a pair of white boxers. Throws out a hand blindly and after a bit of half-hearted fumbling finds the package of cigarettes with the blue clover against black– draws a cigarette out and strokes her thumb along the fancy black wrap with a cool blue ring.

It was not the kind of brand to be found in the corner store which meant that they were likely tailor ordered, the lack of barcode on the thing telling.

She sniffs it and the sting of mint is a soothing familiarity by now.

The twenty-two-year-old woman had been a social smoker and it had carried along – it wasn't a habit she indulged in outside her meetings with Dabi. She would ask or he would offer and there would always be at least one rattling around in one of his pockets.

She tucks it behind an ear and raises her hands up above her, signs 《Hero》 and then 《Jeans》 then 《dumbass》, relishing in the satisfying *smack* at the end.

Repeats it just because she can.

Katsuki misses the silence. It was easier than the loud world around her – words harsher, faster and spoken without care for what kind of impact they carried with. It was very different from the way she'd navigated one life with a very small social circle and a communication that required full attention.

Few bothered to learn sign language and her parents-

Katsuki closes her eyes.

Opens them.

Decides that, maybe it's fine to smoke on her own this *once* as she hauls herself up on her feet.

-

Purple Guy stares at her and Katsuki stares back – the butt of the cigarette trapped between her corner teeth, he with a plastic bag with microwave food dangling from a hand half-stuffed into a pair of dark jeans.

“You’re Bakugou, right?” He’s got a low rough sort of voice and she tenses as he steps forward and into the alleyway instead of continuing past her. “Shinsou Hitoshi,” he introduces himself with a thumb hitched towards his chest.

He’s got a lanky sort of form, lacking in proper muscle strength needed for the Hero Course, and Katsuki doesn’t doubt that, if needed, she could easily take him out but in responding she would activate his quirk which was unacceptable.

She weighs the situation as she reaches for her cigarette, breathing out a trail of smoke before biting down firmly at the butt of it.

《Hello》, she signs and when his brow furrows she can’t resist finger-spelling: 《S-H-I-N-S-O-U-H-I-T-O-S-H-I》 before twisting her fingers into a P and giving it a little shake for 《Purple》 and then tapping her index finger against her temple for 《Mind》.

He gives her a flat unimpressed look and she flashes her teeth around the black cigarette.

Chapter End Notes

I reasoned that there's no way Katsuki willingly would ever put herself in a situation that means a loss of control which is why I'm very delighted to introduce Shinsou to you all - he kinda decided to kinda invite himself in since Katsuki got rid of Mineta early and now I'm having *plans*.

What Katsuki did at the end was give Shinsou a sign-name. It's often something distinguishing, somehow or the other. Say, I have dimples so it might poke at that and so on.

This chapter contains Toga and Ashido both being good-friends in their own... way. I guess.

I love writing Toga, she's a treat.

Aizawa is also kinda--- getting there and we soon have All Might coming up as well.

Rearranged the tags a bit because I decided that it's going to stretch further than 5 chapters and I'm going to bounce more of Class 1-A along with her because of that. I haven't quite decided who Shinsou is interning at but I have a *concept* - gotta browse the manga a bit but I have ideas, I do.

Thank you so much for your comments <3 Will respond in the near future, just been surprisingly busy and wanted to get this chapter out to you when I finally caught the time to write. I do reread them endlessly, esp after starting up a new chapter.

Artsy-death on tumblr~

Hope you enjoyed!

Misstep

Chapter Notes

Raccoon Eyes = Ashido
See Through = Hagakure
Punk = Jirou
Ponytail = Yaoyorozu
Purple Guy = Shinsou
Sparky = Kaminari
Deku = Midoriya
Half-n-Half = Todoroki
Duct Tape = Sero
Round Cheeks = Ochako

《Hey》 = sign language

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Something Katsuki does not take into account: Purple Guy turns out to be far more stubborn than she knows what to do with and, possibly, pretty bored with his internship.

“Who are you interning with anyway?” he asks her, on her floor, inside her apartment, and she isn’t quite sure *how* that had come about but she can’t get herself to quite kick him out because-

《B-E-S-T-J-E-A-N-I-S-T》 she fingerspells with one hand before cramming the ice cream cone awkwardly into her mouth, jaw stretched out, before she gave him the 《Hero》 and 《Jeans》 for the call-sign she’d given the Pro-Hero.

"Hero and..." She flicks her eyes to his jeans very deliberately. "Hero Jeans?" he guesses, snorting when she gave him a lazy thumbs up before popping the cone out of her mouth, pointing towards him. "Me? It was pretty last minute... No Hero Internships at the General Studies." Bitterness, Katsuki observes, flattening her tongue up and over the melting ice cream. "I'm with Slugger."

Katsuki gives him a blank look.

Purple Guy shrugs. "Low-rank Hero," he says. "Not much to him. We do patrols, that's about it."

《Best Jeanist》, she signs. 《Big C-O-M-P-L-A-I-N-E-R.》 She gives him

the proper sign for afterwards before raising her hands up, dropping thumb, index and ring-finger in a pair of devil horns that she raises to her forehead.

Purple Guy's mouth twitches up in appreciation.

It's nearing late night and Katsuki turns her head, considering the setting of the sun outside, realising a bit abstractedly that it's probably the most she's been talking for... years.

"Only two more days now," Purple Guy says a bit absently and-

That's right, isn't it? Katsuki thinks as the other draws a package of cards from his pocket with a raised brow.

I've almost made it.

-

Katsuki's Internship is a mess of berations and unwanted touch, hands heavy against her head and her protests bitten down because the Pro-Hero isn't listening *anyway* and she's sick of the berations that rise loud and sharp around her inside the Genius Agency, but it's weighed against the familiarity of signing and the strange camaraderie she finds in the quiet company of Purple Guy who turns up at her door with food and a quiet sort of pushy request in learning.

It should make her wary but there's a part of her that *craves* – like discovering the use of a lost limb.

It's almost *addicting*.

And, she admits to herself as her mouth flattens, it's a *distraction*.

Katsuki follows at the heel of the Pro-Hero, nails digging into her thighs inside her pockets, quite uncaring about the sharp look her slouch had gained at the beginning of their patrol but – maybe the man is quite fed-up with her as well because he hadn't actually said anything.

Instead she can feel her neck prickle in warning because he's *watching her*.

Katsuki slouches deeper, scowl on her face deepening.

Pro-Heroes.

The best of the best, the Heroes of Society, a rising tidal wave of crime fighters. The same people who also appeared on television during commercials, their merchandise sold for good money and some reaching fame just to live a life of luxury.

What's in a Hero?

Words asked and echoed by a twenty-two-year-old dead woman against the idealised ideas of a dead boy.

I will become the Best.

“Bakugou.” She takes a hard step back when the Hero comes to a sudden halt in front of her, body shifting in that dramatic stance of his, one arm folding over his chest, fingers dragging along the smooth line of his fringe. “Tomorrow is the last day of your Internship.”

She stares up at him, wary.

“What exactly do you think I’ve been attempting to accomplish with you?” His eyes are green and intent and he’s completely ignoring the way people are forced to move around them.

Katsuki knows that, objectively, from what information she’d managed to dig forth on internet, that Best Jeanist is one of the better Heroes out there – his reputation clean and there’s records of him taking hits for fellow Heroes and Civilians and investing time and money in reaching out to high-crime areas in the poorer districts.

He also had a good reputation with *troubled youths* which Katsuki had gambled on meaning he wasn’t so fucking fast to *push* only to come face-to-face with the realisation that Best Jeanist didn’t waste a single moment *to push*.

From the choices offered to her Katsuki had made a decision between Best Jeanist and Gang Orca, lingering but finally unable to resist the top ranking number.

What exactly do you think I’ve been attempting to accomplish with you?

The same thing everyone attempts with me, Katsuki thinks a bit dully, mouth flattening out, wondering exactly what kind of answer he was looking for and what he hoped to accomplish with it.

Eight years of doctors and therapists trying to figure out what had gone wrong with the boy who screamed at the touch of his parents,

who howled and swore and struggled and hated and was so angry and so fucking *terrified* that no one knew what to do with him.

She had found calm in the sea and its silence beneath the surface, a suggestion from a young up-and-coming nurse who had been sympathetic to the child drowning in a too big hoodie, red eyes shining out from beneath its hood, but it wasn't until Masaru brought home a pair of noise cancelling headphones that some of the world started settling around her from the loud and frightening mess it had become.

Trapped in the hospital bed for weeks during healing – a machine shoved down her throat, forcing the broken body to *breathe*, caught in a jumble of

whatishappeningwhoamiwhoarethesepeoplewhoisitsoloudwhyisitsoloudwhyisitsolo

Katsuki's mouth stretches into an off sort-of smile.

"Make me a Hero I suppose, Best Jeanist-*sensei*."

-

"You're late."

Katsuki pauses, boot barely past the door she'd pushed open before Best Jeanist was pushing past her and she turns on her heel, following along with a sense of being tugged along at a leash.

To her surprise the Hero doesn't take the path down and out to the street but instead up the stairs and Katsuki frowns in confusion as it opens up to a large gym-like area – nearly the entire floor open, machines of sorts crowding along the wall to be pulled forth when needed.

"You have a graceful and fluid form." Katsuki blinks, not quite sure she'd heard correctly because- "But you're stiff," Best Jeanist continues as she raises her gaze up to him, finding green eyes almost thoughtfully upon her, slightly narrowed. "You draw your shoulders up habitually and I bet your back is all knotted up." A sigh, fingers gliding habitually over his fringe. "I'm going to work you through a series of stretches and you're going to memorize them and do them every morning and evening to keep your form relaxed."

What-?

Best Jeanist beckons for her and Katsuki takes a slow step forward.

“Remove your boots,” the Hero instructs and she slowly does as told, placing them aside before she straightens up. “If you’re comfortable, remove your shirt,” the man says. “Otherwise change into this.” He brandishes his own brand-shirt with *Best Jeanist* stylishly slanted at the front of it, the entire thing blue with a backdrop of a yellow shadow in his silhouette with black belt-like shape to the letters.

She snatches it from his hand and the Hero *turns his back to her* as she yanks the muscle shirt with the metal at the shoulder over her head and drops it down on the ground, slipping into the surprisingly soft t-shirt.

“Done,” she hears herself voice when he remains politely faced away and he turns back to her with a soft *hmm*.

“We only have a day,” Best Jeanist says with a sort of flourish as she approaches him on bare feet. “Look at what I do and do your best to copy it.” He lowers himself down with a fluid sort of grace. “Once we’ve gone through it twice you’ll have to do it on your own and I’ll correct anything that might hinder rather than aid.”

She carefully sinks to her knees and for the first time during the entire week there’s something akin to approval in his gaze.

-

“I am going to touch your left shoulder and arm.” Katsuki feels something strange move in her chest at the warning just before hands carefully settles on her, shifting her position *just so*. “Pay attention to your shoulder blades – when you’re lifting heavy debris during rescue missions you need to stay focused or you’ll risk damaging your spine. This is best accomplished with a straight form, shoulders back and down.”

What changed? Katsuki wonders just a tad desperately as Best Jeanist guides her through the next form. *And why now?*

I-

-

“Good riddance that sullen, angry boy finally left!”

Tsunagu doesn’t glance back, finger curling around the sharp end of his fringe.

Angry, yes. It had the first thing that had stood out to him when he watched the Sports Festival. That kind of anger was dangerous – was the sort that would end up with either the boy or someone near him *dead*.

It had felt natural to extend the invitation – knowing very well that the arrogant and angry boy would be hard-pressed to resist such a high-ranking Hero offering a week of Internship. Endeavour was only interested in his son and Hawks was... Hawks.

Naturally the boy had come to him.

I might have made a bad call, Tsunagu admits to himself with a rare sense of regret as he peers out the large windows, brow dipping.

He'd been bothered by the response to his question, the way lips stretched without humour, something dark and off about the red eyes that had spent the better part of five days burning into his back.

It wasn't until near the morning, when the strange feeling of off-ness had made him revisit the tape from the Sports Festival, that he got a sense for *why*.

Anger, yes. Tsunagu hadn't been wrong about that. *But behind it...*

He breathes out a small sigh.

You have some of the best Heroes in the world looking after you, he thinks as he pushes away from the table, calling for attention as he lets his hand fall down.

Good luck, Ground Zero.

-

Katsuki's Internship leaves her with a new morning and evening routine, two new phone numbers and a shirt shoved into the very bottom of her bag.

Seeya later, Purple Guy signs as Katsuki grabs the suitcase containing her Hero uniform and makes for Mitsuki who flips her phone shut at the sight of her, hand rising in a wave and sunglasses pushed up.

An arm loops around her shoulder, pulling her into a one-armed hug with a squeeze. "Did you have a good time?"

"Ah."

The woman snorts, pulling her just a bit tighter. “Don’t *ah* me, brat. Details, I want *details*.”

-

Katsuki isn’t quite sure what she feels about being back at U.A. again. There’s a buzz, excitement and disappointment mixing together, the different realities of different Heroes exchanged like gossip while waiting for Aizawa to arrive.

Raccoon Eyes appears at the door opening and she doesn’t waste any time grasping the back of her chair and dragging it with a loud sharp noise that makes several people wince, Katsuki raising a brow where she’s half-slumped with her noise-cancelling headphones in place, chin in palm.

“You,” Raccoon Eyes says with a low voice as she straddles her hair, “wouldn’t believe the Internship I had. Mysteries, all of it very hush-hush.” There’s a wild sort of excitement in her eyes, a brimming sort of thing that is barely contained. “I can’t believe we’re going to be doing it in real-time, Bakugou!” she says, louder.

“You had a good one then, Mina-chan?” Ponytail says beside them and Katsuki pushes one-ear off to keep track of the conversation.

Raccoon Eyes immediately zeroes on her tone. “What happened?” she urges, patting the empty space on the side of the desk.

Ponytail accepts it – a little sigh as she leans forward. “Uwabami-san was far more interested in her modelling work than she was in teaching us anything,” she says in a slight undertone, as if worried about sullyng the reputation of the Hero. “She only accepted us because we were *cute*.”

There’s frustration there, carefully hidden, Katsuki thinks, the corner of her mouth dipping down as she stares at the other girl.

Tall, clever, the kind of smart that easily outstripped everyone in the classroom and would have zeroed her on the top-spot if U.A. didn’t naturally rate destructive quirks and capacity to take-out Villains as the number one priority.

Katsuki wouldn’t have been very amused to find herself zeroed out because she was *pretty* either.

“She didn’t teach you anything?” Raccoon Eyes demands as she

straightens up.

“She had us participate in her commercials,” Ponytail admits, lowering her head, a complicated sort of doubt in her eyes. “We didn’t even get to patrol...”

“Maybe-“ Katsuki says carefully. “Talk to Midnight-sensei about it?” she suggests, knowing that most things out of her mouth would sound cheap considering the gender she was presenting as. “She has a whole history of fighting for female Hero rights. She’s the one that got through that a body-suit wouldn’t be standard regulation some years ago - she probably knows some good Agencies for your next Internship.”

Ponytail gives her a surprised look and then a hesitant sort of smile. “That’s a really good idea, Bakugou-kun.”

“Bakugou is fine,” she says, fingers twitching a bit uncomfortably under the attention of her clever eyes.

“You can call me Yaomomo then,” Ponytail offers, smile warming. “Most do.”

“Bakugou here is a *real* softy beneath all that anger and scowling,” Raccoon Eyes says loudly with a blinding sort of grin that makes Katsuki scowl right back at her. “It’s adorable, really.”

To her mortification Katsuki can feel the very tips of her ears go red.

“m not adorable,” she grumbles, slouching lower in her seat and desperately trying to ignore the way Raccoon Eyes coos as she instead focuses her eyes on Ponytail. “’s always going to be idiots,” Katsuki says with a scowl, batting away pink fingers reaching for her ear. “And those who don’t take you seriously. But *fuck* ‘em.”

The part of her that died twenty-two-year-old deaf woman echoes the words with resolution.

-

Katsuki slouches near the back of the class, listening with half-an-ear to All Might who is loud and boisterous and... there.

She finds herself strangely cold, half-expecting Half-n-Half to be closer by but he’s nearly at the other end of the group and she folds her arms over her chest, scowling at the ground.

She can still feel the bite of the metal, All Might's loud *A HA HA HA*, fist on his hip and all gleaming Heroism after he'd forced the medal over her head where she stood chained in front of thousands.

It's fine now. Why? Because I am here!

Katsuki rubs at her bicep, barely recognising the new groups and the task as she stares a hole into the ground, unaware of the way more than one pair of eyes are looking at her oddly.

-

"-kugou!" A floating blue glove appear within her vision and she halts suddenly, looking up automatically for a pair of eyes and finding nothing.

Decides that it's strangely awkward to look at where she *knows* there's a face only to see the green and brown outline of a tree through her skull.

"What?" she demands.

Gloves moving – arms clearly folding up. "We're a *team*," See Through informs her. "Were you listening to anything All Might-sensei was saying?" she demands.

Not really.

Katsuki scowls at her.

An unimpressed huff of air. "We're doing tag-teams," See Through informs her, pointing, and Katsuki reluctantly looks over – studying the teams up ahead before them.

She'd paid enough attention to know she was second to last, Deku teaming up with Sparky against Half-n-Half and Round Cheeks. "It's a speed thing," See Through informs her. "We can either take the roof-parts or go through the street, first who gets to the goal in the middle wins."

Deku already had Sparky on his back, hands curled to steady beneath his thighs, and Round Cheeks touches her quirk to herself to make herself light as air before practically koala-ing herself to a visibly tense Half-n-half who doesn't really relax until Deku brushes their shoulders together.

Most in the class had some way to move quickly with notable exceptions and Katsuki frowns as she turns back to See Through.

“Yeah, I’m slow,” See Through admits with what Katsuki suspects might be a challenge and a glare from the way her neck prickles. “So you better figure out a way to compensate for it because we *both* need to cross the finish line for it to count.”

If Katsuki was the kind of person who could accept a loss, even during lessons, she might have just upped and left because it didn’t leave more than one glaring solution and the idea makes her shoulders curl up, mouth flattening.

It’s a tense wait between them as team after team go up against each other with varying success until it’s finally their turn.

Katsuki kicks her shoes off and roughly yanks the hem up, securing it in place. Punk places one booted foot down on the hip of Duct Tape and hoists herself up with a little surprised wobble from him before they stabilize and Katsuki stiffly lowers herself to a crouch, waiting for a good moment, just about to turn her head and snap at her to *hurry the fuck up*, when arms carefully wrap around her and Katsuki reaches blindly for an invisibly thigh when she feels it press against her right side – easily hoisting See Through up and with her as she straightens up.

“They’re going to take the roof top,” See Through says in a low tone, a whisper of air over her ear.

Normally Katsuki focuses her explosions in her palms – the sweat glands responsible for her explosive chemical in her feet forcefully shut down. But it doesn’t mean she *can’t* use them and she curls and wiggles her toes, feeling the warm late spring sun above them, the prickle of sweetness stinging sharp from her shoes and feet alike.

“I memorized the map,” See Through continues as Katsuki settles at the white line, ignoring whatever All Might was saying in favour of listening to the low voice of the other. “I think there’s an underground path near the fourth district on the left-side that will put us nearly directly at the goal.”

Katsuki tightens her grip on invisible thighs.

She had, foolishly so, assumed that See Through was wearing some sort of uniform that filtered to work naturally with her invisibility. Considering the world they lived in it hadn’t seemed like much of a

stretch and she hadn't thought twice about – had had no reason to think twice about it.

But the thigh in her palm is bare, prickling with goose bumps despite the warmth above, and there's a careful deliberateness to the way the other holds onto her to avoid pushing bare body up against her.

It makes anger, violent and badly tempered, rise inside of her as she scowls furiously out at nothing.

As far as See Through was concerned she was just another teenage boy and the situation is so damn *wrong*.

Who the fuck allowed this? Katsuki wonders as a gun blows loud through the air and a sharp low explosion goes off, propelling them forward in an explosion of fast steps that jerks them sharply forward, trial and error with additional weight as See Through yanks hard at her to take a left and then a right, skidding and twisting to blow the next step against a wall with a sharp crack to avoid losing momentum.

They skid down to a dark alleyway with eleven minutes to spare and See Through easily slips off her, an invisible force that rucks up the heavy lid and pushes it aside before, Katsuki supposes as she counts to five, trying to follow the shift of noise, slips down, and she takes a slow step forward and when a call comes from below she grabs the metal railings and slides down with an immediate chill that runs from the soles of her feet and up.

It's eerie.

She knows See Through is there but she can't fucking *see her*, even as her nose identifies her somewhere in front of her.

"Down this way," See Through says and Katsuki squints, grunting as she steps forward, eyes slowly adjusting to the dark, and she can soon make out the puffs of air from the other in front of her as they thread their way down.

"How do you think they're doing?" See Through asks, the clack of cold teeth just caught. "The additional weight should have slowed them down and navigating by rooftop is always harder..."

There's a drip drop of liquid, the stone beneath her soles sucking out all heat, and there's a naked fifteen-year-old girl in front of her.

"Why the fuck don't you have a costume?" Katsuki demands to a

pause of steps that makes her halt, staring blankly out into the darkness, mouth flat.

“Ah, noticed that did you?” And for all that there’s a levity to her words there’s a tenseness there now, her pace picking up as she begins moving. “Apparently it’s really hard to make a fabric suitable for the kind of stealth my quirk allows for,” See Through says as Katsuki follows at her heels. “Most of the class thinks I’ve got one so I’d appreciate if you kept it to yourself.”

Katsuki’s mouth curls down.

“It’s not really that bad,” See Through says and Katsuki *really* doesn’t believe her. “Aizawa-sensei promised they’d have something for me after the summer and - ah, here it is!”

Katsuki stares up the ladder, lid moved aside and as far as her eyes can see nothing moves or shifts other than the brush of bare feet against metal that her ears picks up on and she frowns as she hoists herself up after the other.

There’s a tense moment where Katsuki’s crouching down before arms are once again wrapping around her and Katsuki very pointedly grabs as close to the knee as she can as she hoists her up.

-

Two minutes later, five minutes before end time, Katsuki is forced to go low, twisting down, one hand lashing out with a measured explosion to makes them glide nearly flat along the ground and below the tape that explodes out of nowhere.

“Hold on,” she grunts and See Through’s arms tightens around her, breasts pushed flat against her back and thighs wrapping tight as she took them through an awkward twist, launching them up and above with a step-by-step between walls, palm out and down as they went over the edge and a loud and violent explosion tears through the air as part of the building burst beneath them, crumbling to shouts below and behind them.

But it doesn’t take long before Duct Tape and Punk is going high behind them, more tape exploding out at their heels, and See Through yanks her left, forcing Katsuki into a shared roll to a grunt in her ear as the other momentarily bears both their weight before they pull up and she lurches over the edge.

“Left-“

Katsuki misses the next step, an unholy noise *tooloudtooloudtooloud* and it pulses and moves through her, the world narrowing strangely around her, mind locking down and barely recognising the desperate sort of shout muffled by the world that's ringing around her and-

Katsuki distantly recognises that she's on her knees, See Through heavy on her back, invisible hands over her ears, and she pushes up with a grunt, stumbling forward and pressing her palm blankly against the building the noise was coming from.

Stop, she thinks and the world crumbles around them.

Chapter End Notes

This chapter can be summed up as thus: reality is gritty and there's no quick fix for trauma.

Poked around with the tags again because it's turning longer than planned and changed the summary because it felt a bit long.

Artsy-death on tumblr if you want to swing by~

Hope you enjoyed!

Trapped

Chapter Notes

Raccoon Eyes = Ashido
See Through = Hagakure
Punk = Jirou
Ponytail = Yaoyorozu
Purple Guy = Shinsou
Sparky = Kaminari
Deku = Midoriya
Half-n-Half = Todoroki
Round Cheeks = Ochako

《Hey》 = sign language

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

A curse, the sharp sting of burnt sugar, eyes opening to darkness.

Katsuki becomes aware of two things slowly: she's sprawled out on her back, a body hovering somewhere above her, legs spread and settled on either side of her waist, practically curled against her, shivering and leeching desperately for warmth in a small tight space.

“What-“

“Don't activate your quirk-“ The hurried gasp stills one hand, even if it hadn't been a thought that crossed her mind considering the absolute sickening overwhelming stench of her quirk practically overwhelming around them. “We're trapped,” the voice continues as Katsuki's sluggish mind identifies her as See Through. “The building fell down and- I got you out of the way but I think you hit your head, when we went down. You've been unconscious for – *I don't know.*” A rough swallow. “Do you have any communication device on you? My costume doesn't exactly come with one...”

Katsuki stares blankly up into the darkness, slowly becoming aware of the pressure on her leg and the pounding headache now that she searches for it.

Everything feels sluggish. Distant.

“You're cold.” It comes out more slurred than she meant, eyes squeezing shut, and See Through makes a helpless sort of noise

somewhere above her.

“I’m naked,” she giggles, just edging on the hysterics. “And we’re underground – I don’t know how far but the building, it took the entire ground with it. It must have been *structural unsound* or, something. Isn’t that what Ochaco-chan always complains about?” Katsuki’s brow furrows and she reaches up clumsily, finding an arm which she slides up to gently squeeze a muscular shoulder.

“I think,” Katsuki manages as a hand clamps down on hers, desperate for some sort of grounding in a situation neither of them were prepared for, and Katsuki thinks – distantly – that See Through has very calloused hands. “I think there’s an earbud from our first lesson in one of the back pouches. All Might – he never requested it back.”

“You think you can lift your back?” See Through asks with a breath of hope and Katsuki grunts, curling her shoulders down and trying her best not to think too hard about the fact that her leg was very much *stuck* as she curls her back up, the other pushing herself flat against her front, and the space must be far smaller than Katsuki had first realised because she barely gets inches up before See Through’s back hits resistance against the stone with a muffled noise of strain.

But it’s enough for a hand to grope blindly beneath her, digging into the first pouch, her breath warm against Katsuki’s collarbone. A pause, a crinkle of plastic.

“... Do you keep tampons on you?”

“s good to have,” Katsuki huffs. “Nose and menstrual blood alike.”

See Through lets out a wheezy sort of disbelieving laugh, curling further to reach the second pouch when the first didn’t reveal anything and her fingers snag and she shifts carefully as she drags it out and Katsuki sinks back against the ground.

“There’s stations right?” See Through murmurs and she feels the way muscles work as the other twists and turns the tiny dial without vision to guide her.

They’re practically squished together and Katsuki thinks that it’s might as well that it’s dark – it’s not nearly as strange to accept the invisibility part of her quirk when all her senses are registering her as *there*. The smell of sweat, the rise and fall of her chest, the way she’s curling to keep as much as she can of Katsuki while trying to leech of her warmth.

"I don't think they're close enough," See Through says after a long moment and Katsuki gives a small jerk, realizing she'd been dosing off, grimacing a bit as she shifts.

"Nothing to do but wait then," she mumbles tiredly.

"Suppose so," See Through says, tense somewhere above her, and Katsuki's head is swimming and she's tired which is probably *not good* but-

"You can rest against me," Katsuki gets out, aware of the way muscles tenses up. "You're icy cold and I'm warm. Shared body heat."

A chest rising and expanding above her and then a careful shift.

"You sure?" See Through asks carefully, tone traced with a careful sort of hesitance. "You're not exactly the... cuddly type."

"m not shitty enough to let you freeze," Katsuki says tiredly. "And I think I have a concussion."

"You're not just saying that to have a pretty naked girl wrapped tight around you?" See Through jokes tensely as she carefully settles down against Katsuki, head turning and ear pressing down near her shoulder as the other draws her arms and legs as tight against her as she can.

The position leaves her acutely aware of the warm breath on her neck, the slight thrum of a heartbeat, but there's a fogginess to her mind and she's too tired to *think*.

"Not exactly interested in girls," she grumbles.

"You like boys?" See Through asks, voice rising.

"Why the hell do you sound surprised?" Katsuki asks, tufts of short hair tickling her nose as she breathes in.

"I shouldn't be," See Through admits, shoulders slowly easing, and Katsuki strongly suspects she might be smiling even as a shiver runs through her body. "Don't take this the wrong way but your aggression levels really go up around boys so it wasn't really something I took into consideration." A pause. "And," See Through adds, "I think I've only seen you willingly hang out with Ashido."

Katsuki grunts.

"You're a hard guy to read, Bakugou," See Through comments,

shifting to get as much of her heat as possible. “But I don’t think you’re a particularly bad one.”

-

“... Do you think you could, like, hold me?” See Through asks some fifteen minutes later. “I’m really, really cold.”

Katsuki grunts, shifting carefully, pretending not feel the way sticky blood clings to her arms and hands as she draws the other tight against her.

-

Katsuki jerks awake with the first strip of light hitting her face, eyes opening sharply, squinting as she slowly becomes aware of the noise and- there’s definitely shouting but it’s muffled, as from far above.

On her chest, See Through doesn’t as much as stir and Katsuki tightens her grip on her, arms locked stiff in place as her muddy thoughts struggles to string together.

Light. Noise.

Rescue.

“We’re *here*!” it leaves her mouth a rough rasp and Katsuki grimaces but does a second attempt, loosening one hand to reach out and scratch at the tiny stream of light but it’s barely more than a thumb in size and she can’t really make out anything through it from her angle. “Hey- HEY!”

The sound of her voice makes her wince, the noise amplified with the pounding headache, but she pushes through it shouting to a sudden hush, something heavy thudding to the ground and then-

“Bakugou!”

Aizawa-sensei’s voice rings out loud and sharp and Katsuki swallows before echoing his name loudly in response and- suddenly she can hear footsteps and she does it again and again and-

“Bakugou-“ Aizawa’s voice is a balm to her jagged panic, close but still a bit muffled. “Is Hagakure with you as well?”

Haga-?

Katsuki's mind struggles to grasp and – “Yes,” she gets out. “But she's unconscious, I think the cold got to her and she's lost a lot of blood and I don't know how bad it is. I tried to keep her warm but-“

And, Katsuki recognises distantly, that she's verging on a panic attack and she snaps her mouth shut, forcing herself to breathe with a quiver that runs through her entire body.

“We're both here,” she squeezes out wanting *outoutout*.

“You just need to hold on for a little while longer, Bakugou,” Aizawa's voice reaches her, gruff but strangely soothing. “We're working to get you out as fast as we can - Cementoss and Power Loader are both here. Are either of you hurt anywhere?”

“Hagakure's back and- I don't know, I think the worst was the cold but it's dark and I can't see.” Katsuki shivers, old and tired panic clawing for attention. “My leg – it's stuck and I think – I think I have a concussion.” It's a dull sort of realisation that veers against the panic leaving her in a strange sort of dissonance, jerking sharply when she realises Aizawa has been calling for her and-

“I definitely have a concussion,” she gets out and somewhere above her Aizawa breathes out.

Another voice and- Katsuki knows that voice but she's *tired*, See Through cold and shivering even unconscious.

Shivering is good, Katsuki thinks distantly but the *why* eludes her.

“- kugou, I need you to listen to me,” Aizawa presses in that calm soothing voice, a slight strain in his voice, and Katsuki wonders how many times he'd been forced to repeat himself as she grunts out tiredly. “Are you listening to me?”

“Yeah,” Katsuki forces out. “m listening.”

“We're going to try and widen the hole and get a heat blanket down to you, alright? When that happens I need you to wrap the both of you up in it the best that you can and then press the button at the corner to start it up. Can you do that for me?”

Can you do that for me? What a particular way of phrasing things.

Katsuki thinks she responds but she's not quite sure.

Can't quite get herself to care either way.

-

Blanket good, blanket warm.

Clumsy fingers, a guiding voice somewhere around her, urging her push something and-

-

Katsuki jerks blearily to awareness as the weight of her chest is suddenly *moving* and a questioning sort of noise leaves her mouth, soothed by a palm that brushes gently over her sweaty forehead and she squints up – makes out dark messy hair pulled back into a ponytail and a pair of dark eyes watching her carefully.

“Hey – stay with me, Bakugou,” Aizawa says firmly. “We’re getting you out but we need to remove the rocks keeping your foot stuck first. Everything is going to be fine.”

Fine? Katsuki thinks distantly, recognising more than one Pro-Hero around her. *But we’re dead?*

“s she going to be alright?” Katsuki slurs tiredly. “Tried to keep her warm.”

“I know you did,” Aizawa soothes and when she doesn’t jerk away from his touch he keeps petting her, brushing down spikes of pale blond, her eyes dilated and focuses half on him, half past his shoulder. “She’ll be fine. Recovery Girl is looking her over right now. You just focus on staying awake.”

Katsuki grunts, tired, exhausted and confused by the mess of her mind, grasping for the focus of a rough palm.

“Listen to Eraser, little listener,” Present Mic says as he drops down beside them, all leather and grease and handing something to Aizawa that Katsuki can’t quite make out and-

Oh, Katsuki thinks, looking at the moon. *It’s night.*

She wonders if the sun in the distance is setting or rising, a strange sort of ringing noise in her ears as she grimaces, pushing down with her shoulders to look at her foot only-

Present Mic moves and Katsuki’s attention is diverted by loud yellow

hair and eyes that makes her stare, startled at the sight of them without glasses blocking them out and-

Katsuki doesn't feel very much like herself at all, the feeling hitting her hard as she twists her head and a bag appears in her vision, a shiver running through her, cold sweat beading on her shoulders and forehead, stomach cramping as she throws up a second time and-

A sleeve is tugged down and Aizawa gently wipes her lips clean as Katsuki trembles and-

-

Katsuki is getting really tired of waking up in a jumble but she squints her eyes at the bright light, turning and looking down at the chair and the woman slumped over on her bed, categorizing the pale blonde hair and wan face, worry lines and dark smudges beneath her eyes.

It's hard not to feel like an imposter when she keeps causing nothing but trouble for the parents who loved their son more than anything else – even after he'd died and ended up not quite right.

She slowly pushes herself up, realising that someone had changed her out of her training gear and into a soft t-shirt and a pair of sweatpants, both with the U.A. logo stylised on them.

Touches her hands to her ears and carefully removes the headphones.

Mitsuki's chest keeps rising and falling, phone clutched in her hand and a call counting minutes on the screen. It was likely, Katsuki thinks a bit distantly, she'd fallen asleep talking to Masaru who was out of the country on job business.

She winces as she shifts her leg but she leans forward and carefully slips it out of the woman's hand, pulling it up to her ear.

"Tou-san?" she asks quietly.

There's a sudden thud, a scramble and a hasty excuse to someone before-

"*Katsuki*," the breath of relief makes her squeeze her eyes shut, drawing her knees up as best as she can as she rests her forehead against them. "*You're awake. Mitsuki-*"

"She's asleep," Katsuki says quietly. "How long...?"

"It took them almost twenty hours to get you out," Masaru admits tensely through the phone and it's rattling to hear the clear strain behind the admittance. "There were structural damage before your lesson and what should have collapsed a wall ended up concaving the very ground you were standing on. It was no-ones fault."

Something eases slowly inside of her at the words and she swallows.

"Hagakure-"

"She lost a lot of blood and that coupled with the cold slowed down her heartrate which is why she was hard to rouse. Recovery Girl sent her home some hours ago. She's going to be missing the rest of the week as she rests up but other than that she's fine. The other two you were competing against managed to get out of the way and weren't hurt."

"That's... that's good." A quiver runs through her shoulders.

"That teacher of yours, he's quite something," Masaru says through the phone. "He stuck with you through the entire thing, Mitsuki said. Not even All Might did that! He had to leave when lessons started up but he was down for lunch and afternoon classes should be over soon. It's likely he'll stop by again."

Katsuki appreciates the heads-up, she does.

"When can I go home?" she asks tensely.

"I think I'll be the one to answer that," an elderly voice comes from beside her and Katsuki opens her eyes, turning to look at the woman as the curtain was yanked aside and she gave her desk a little kick, gliding close on a chair with wheels, cane folded over her lap.

"Can you put me on speaker?" Masaru requests quietly and Katsuki slowly removes the phone, pressing the button in question.

"Masaru-san," Recovery Girl says in acknowledgement, receiving a greeting back. "How are you feeling?" This she directs to Katsuki.

"My headache is gone," she admits, fingers curling around the telephone, taking comfort in familiarity. "My foot still hurts a bit but that's it."

"You were lucky," Recovery Girl tells her. "You'll make full-recovery. I want to keep you for an hour more to make sure you're not feeling any adverse effects from the concussion now that you're awake. My

quirk healed up the worst of it and removed the pressure on your brain but the body always needs a bit of time to stabilize. It is likely you'll be feeling a bit dizzy to and from in the following two or three days. Anything worse than that and I want you to let me know immediately, is that understood?"

Katsuki nods a bit tensely.

"Katsuki, words." Masaru's light reminder makes her jaw clench.

"Yes, ma'am," she says grudgingly. "Thank you."

The Pro-Hero merely smiles. "Gummy bears?" she offers, proofing her hand, and Katsuki slowly reaches out to take a handful.

"Mitsuki fell asleep some two hours ago," Masaru says through the phone. *"Let her sleep, if you can."*

"I will," Katsuki says quietly, pushing the phone back from speaker mode and pressing it up against her ear.

"Good."

Katsuki stares down the bed, pressing the phone just a bit closer, knowing that-

"I love you," Masaru says and her fist clenches white-knuckled around the silvery device. *"I'm glad you're alright. I'll see you soon, son."*

The conversation ends with a soft *click*.

-

Katsuki is playing around with an old mobile game on Mitsuki's old flip-phone when the door opens up and she raises her head, finding Aizawa-sensei stepping inside, hair dark and messy, a hand dragging absently thorough it as he greets Recovery Girl.

But his eyes are on her and Katsuki isn't quite sure what to feel as the elderly Pro-Hero gives Aizawa's knee a pat before trotting out, closing the door behind her.

Katsuki takes comfort in the sleeping form of Mitsuki as her teacher approaches, sinking down on the spinning chair left in the other Hero's wake, a slight slouch, his eyes hard to read as she flips the phone close, trapping it between her palms.

Aizawa glances briefly to Mitsuki before focusing his eyes steadily on hers. "So you're awake."

Katsuki remembers a soft hand against her forehead and a calm soothing voice amidst fragmented confusion.

Isn't sure what to feel.

"We're tearing down the entirety of the city training ground and rebuilding it," Aizawa tells her. "Nedzu is overseeing it himself. Something like this won't happen again." He sounds exhausted but it's the only clear read she gets of him – there's a hard sort of emotion to place in the depth of his eyes. "You did good," he tells her. "All things considering."

You did good, words that echo strange, her gaze lowering, a slight furrow to her brow.

There's a gap between them – drawn in the aftermath of the Sports Festival and Katsuki isn't sure what to feel about her moment of vulnerability caught by him and even soothed and she swallows, neck warm, words stuck strangely in her mouth as she stares down at the green covers.

"I hope," Aizawa says after the silence has stretched for a long time between them. "That you know that you can come to me if there's anything you're worried about."

Katsuki isn't quite sure what to answer and ends up saying nothing at all.

-

"Before you leave," Recovery Girl says, as Mitsuki has left after a reassuring kiss to her forehead to fetch the car and pull it up to the entrance, "I want a quick word with you."

Katsuki tugs the last knot in place on her sneakers, straightening up and frowning at the slight crease in Recovery Girl's brows.

"Eraserhead helped me change you out of your clothes." Katsuki's stomach twists, knowing with sudden clarity what exactly she was inching towards. "The scars on your body-"

"Are none of your fucking business," Katsuki bites out, lips pulling back to reveal sharp white teeth.

Recovery Girl pauses and then sighs. "I thought you might say as much," the elderly Pro-Hero says. "If I honestly thought it was the cause of abuse I would have contacted the police." Katsuki goes tense under sharp eyes. "But I suspect that, in your situation, I might just end up doing you more harm than good. Whoever caused that, I don't think it was your parents."

"Mitsuki and Masaru are good people," she snarls.

Recovery Girl huffs. "Calm yourself, boy." She taps her cane against the ground and Katsuki gives her a flat look of dislike. "I just told you I didn't suspect them. Those burns – they're undeniable quirk made. There's few out there who could manage such a hot and precise thing."

Katsuki remains tense, jaw clenched tight. "So what are you going to do?" she demands.

"For now? Nothing." Recovery Girl admits with the sort of reluctance that gnawed at her professionalism. "The contract you signed upon entrance to U.A. prevents me from telling your parents and unless in the suspicion of abuse I am not allowed to act but I want you to be aware that there are help here if you need it. U.A. will never turn those in need away. But." She pins him in place with a stern look. "If you find yourself hurt like that again I want you to come here. I won't ask questions but burns can be tricky and they carry a high-chance of infection."

Considering the risk of the Hero Course contracts had been drawn to allow children the final say in their eventual withdrawal and granted a sort of guardianship contract to the class teacher. Aizawa was the only one Recovery Girl was legally allowed and required to share all of her history with and in a situation where Mitsuki and Masaru couldn't be reached then Aizawa had the final say.

He even had the right to overrule when if he suspected they were making a bad call but it was the kind of power that was seldom put in motion past praxis.

It was a fine-printed thing at the end of the contract, carefully worded. It was partly to prevent parents from pressing legal actions when students, unavoidably, got hurt somehow or the other against each other or against teachers but it was also to prevent outside influence in forming their future Heroes.

Katsuki stares at her for a moment longer before grasping her bag,

ignoring the slight dizziness with a grimace as she steps out, closing the door firmly behind her.

-

Katsuki feels another headache coming on when she turns her phone on after dinner, blueberry pie half-forgotten on the TV-table as she scrolls through the new group-chat she'd been invited to by Raccoon Eyes.

It looked like some kind of class group-chat and the mess of nicknames stares back at her, messages short-hand and full of emoji's.

She leaves the group after scanning through enough to note *Invisibly Girl's* expressed relief at being home, followed by many reassurances and badgering about her own health and Katsuki *was so not dealing with that*.

Her phone buzzes near two seconds later.

RACCOON GIRL: YOU LIVE.

RACCOON GIRL: i saw you in the chat!

RACCOON GIRL: or, rather, leave the chat.

An emoji with a sweat-drop followed the message, sheepish looking, Katsuki decides after a moment of squinting at it.

RACCOON GIRL: Are you OK?

She writes a short message letting the other know she was *fine* and *yes she was home*.

Hesitates, but takes a picture of the blueberry pie and after a long moment of hovering her thumb over the send-button clicks it and backtracks out of the conversation and opens up the next.

PURPLE GUY: you're just extra enough to drop an entire building on yourself, aren't you?

Katsuki stares at the message before snorting.

BAKUGOU: i live for your care.

She doesn't have time to back out before her phone buzzes rapidly in several short-hand messages.

RACCOON EYES: i'm glad to hear you're alright <3

RACCOON EYES: i mean, they do say some people are too dumb to die.

PURPLE GUY: u're too dumb to die so

RACCOON EYES: and only a dumbass manages to be back two days before-

Katsuki twitches and shoves her phone down and under the couch pillow with a scowl, grabbing for her cooled blueberry pie.

Chapter End Notes

Katsuki really does have the best of (not admitted to) friends, doesn't she?

Pre-test studies coming up and things are about to go down in some curious ways! I do think Dabi should be making a reappearance real soon too.....

This chapter might not seem like much but it's way important in its own way and there's a reason for it all.

I also kinda wanted to weigh what might happen outside of canon lessons because we've worked through those endlessly.

Thank you so much for your comments!! I'm gonna return and respond to them but I gotta bounce this up, walk the dog and then do some cleaning so that'll have to be later tonight.

Artsy-death on tumblr if you want to swing by~

Hope you enjoyed!

Signs

Chapter Notes

Raccoon Eyes = Ashido
See Through = Hagakure
Punk = Jirou
Purple Guy = Shinsou
Class Rep = Iida
Sparky = Kaminari
Deku = Midoriya
Half-n-Half = Todoroki
Round Cheeks = Ochako
Creep = Monoma.

《Hey》 = sign language

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Mitsuki insists on dropping her off upon returning to school once her body had recovered and Katsuki crams her toast into her mouth, scowling but not protesting when his mother adjusted the slouchy tie around her neck. She'd just end up loosening it anyhow, disliking the too tight itch of it, but Mitsuki had clearly been worried and Katsuki mutters and snarls but allows her to fuss during the days of her recovery.

Masaru slips her a bento with a ruffle of her hair and sticks a toast into her mouth when she opens her mouth to complain. "Growing boys need their food, son," he says warmly with a little pat.

Katsuki grumbles but it's covered in a generous layer of blueberry jam and she chews it slowly during the ride to U.A., Mitsuki strangely quiet beside her as she comes to a slow stop outside the large tall gates.

"I have my reservations about this," she says as Katsuki reaches for the handle, pausing and craning around.

Mitsuki's mouth is flat, her hair nearly as messy as her own, and Katsuki had wondered on more than one occasion what it would be like to echo the black lines of her eyeliner with their likeness having been pointed out on more than one occasion.

But their son was already dead and Katsuki owes too much to them

both to do more than entertain it in the darkness of her bedroom.

“I’m your mother and I worry for your safety,” Mitsuki continues, ignoring the way Katsuki narrows her eyes as she leans forward. “But you’ve been steady set on becoming a Hero ever since you heard the name *All Might* and I’m here to support you, whatever choices you make. But I want you to know what we’ll be proud of you no matter what you chose to do with your life.”

“I’m going to be the *Best*,” Katsuki tells her with flat determination.

Mitsuki holds her gaze for a long moment before sighing and Katsuki twitches as her hand rises to give her forehead a little *thwap*.

“Brat,” she says fondly. “You should invite your friends over your dinner sometime this week.” It’s not a suggestion and Katsuki growls as she yanks the car door open, kicking it shut behind her, window scrolling down behind her. “Have a good day, honey!” Mitsuki croons cheerily and Katsuki snarls a goodbye, chin burying into the folds of Dabi’s scarf as she tugs sharply at her tie.

-

Katsuki is *early* and she’s regretting everything about it, noise cancelling headphones around her neck as Purple Guy droops in his seat opposite her with liquid satisfaction.

《*I see you’re in one piece*》 he signs as Raccoon Eyes watches them very very carefully where she’d quieted after he’d greeted her with a twist of his hands. 《*I’m most impressed-*》 Here he makes the sign for K and then Explosion, clearly feeling smug with himself.

《*Creative*》 she signs dryly, ignoring the slight softening inside of her that he’d taken the time to research names in the deaf community.

He makes a P, gives it a shake for *purple* and then a single tap against his head for *mind*.

His expression is terribly dry and her mouth twitches despite herself.

“Okay- okay, this isn’t *fair*!” Raccoon Eyes slams her palm down on the desk, leaning so close to Katsuki that she twitches, shoulders going up. “You can’t just go about making friends without telling me! And- and you already have your own *language*.”

To Katsuki’s discomfort she looks genuinely upset and it tugs strangely

at something inside of her.

“It’s American Sign Language,” Purple Guy drawls, an edge to his smile. “*Bakugou* has been *teaching me*.”

His mouth curls around her name and Raccoon Eyes bares her teeth, hand snapping out to curl around his tight and yank him towards her as Katsuki leans back warily, not sure what to make of the entire thing.

“Maybe-“ Purple Guy says with a glint in his eyes. “You’re just not that close.”

Katsuki frowns when Raccoon Eyes releases him as if burnt, eyes flashing before she shoved away with a twist of her heel to Sparky and Punk who immediately turned worried eyes on her when she slumped down.

Her hands knots in her lap and she lowers her gaze to them as Aizawa steps into the classroom, calling for attention as she scowls.

-

Whatever has Raccoon Eyes so twisted up means that Katsuki finds herself eating lunch alone on the roof, stomaching knotting uncomfortably as she keeps glancing warily towards the door, and half-expecting it to slam open any moment.

She paws for her phone but it’s strangely silent, no new messages on the screen.

I don’t need friends, Katsuki thinks firmly to herself as her fingers clenches tight around it before she shoves it down.

-

“She’s jealous,” See Through’s voice comes from her right and Katsuki slowly turns towards her. “You might not realize it but she talks about you a lot and now here’s someone who has only been in the class for a small amount of time and you’re already friendly.”

“We lived in the same corridor during our internship,” Katsuki grumbles.

“And it’s easier for you to talk with him with sign than verbally considering his quirk,” See Through hums. “Maybe you should explain

that to Ashido?" she suggests. "You *are* friends, aren't you?"

They're seated down on the floor, watching the sparring matches between her classmates, Class Rep gearing up to go against Half-n-Half with a glint in his eyes and a small curled smirk from the other as Deku cheered loudly for them both.

See Through had been the first one up, winded and loosing badly against Froggy whose versatile quirk slotted her among one of the highest ranked in the class. Katsuki had yet to go up against her, twitching a bit at the thought of that long tongue wrapping tight around her.

I'll blow it off if she tries, she promises herself as her eyes linger on the back of the girl until she turns around, finger touching against her lip with a little tilt of her head and Katsuki bares her teeth.

"I never got to thank you," See Through says when she doesn't answer. "Aizawa-sensei said you were quite worried about me when they found us."

"You were fucking *freezing*," Katsuki says with twist of her mouth at the reminder. "It's their fucking job to make sure you're goddamn *safe* and they can't even get you a fucking *jacket*." She glows furiously at All Might as the man laughs loudly, something cold slithering down her back at the sound.

She jerks when fingers touches against her jaw but there's nothing to look at, no face to read, no eyes to tell what the other is thinking as her thumb draws over the small scar is left from the the metal muzzle at the corner of her mouth where it'd bitten down.

It's fucking *eerie* to see nothing when the touch is clearly *there*.

"I spoke with Aizawa-sensei," See Through tells her in a light tone as Katsuki tries very hard not to feel stupid for glaring at the tree visible through her skull. "I told him that I didn't feel very comfortable working with just anyone seeing as my situation is as it is. So – I get to decide who I want to work with until the support class figure out how to make me a proper costume."

"Good," Katsuki grumbles, shoulders loosening a fraction. "Should have been fucking obvious you wouldn't want to work with just anyone like that." The words sounds awkward in her mouth and her mouth flattens as she turns away, pausing as fire swirled up and squinting.

Half-n-Half hadn't shown a single inclination to use his fire before the Sports Festival but since his match with Deku he'd been using more and more of it and her eyes snags at them, reminded of the white and blue of Dabi's hot flames for all that they weren't nearly as pretty.

Probably isn't as hot either, Katsuki thinks with some gratification.

"I told him I'd prefer working with either the girls or you," See Through says and Katsuki's eyes snaps towards her, mouth opening. "My decision," she presses and Katsuki's neck itches, fairly sure the other was smirking at her. "Don't worry, I won't tell anyone what you told me- your secret is safe with me!"

Katsuki gives her a blank look, snorting as she drew her arms around her knees and pressed her mouth against them.

"Whatever," she mutters, eyes lingering on the back of Raccoon Eyes head and then drifting to Purple Guy who stood just a bit off to the left, still the outsider, slouched with heavy eyes on them all.

-

In a turn of events Katsuki finds herself awkwardly hovering outside the classroom, hands shoved into the pocket of her pants and scowling furiously at Deku who stammered something incomprehensible before getting snagged along by Round Cheeks who grinned at her with a cheery goodbye to several strange looks between them both.

Most of the classes were getting out, the corridor filled with students, and Katsuki can hear their chatter, the way they laughed and mocked her behind their hands when they caught sight of her even as she scowled harder, sinking deeper and deeper into her scarf until only her eyes were visible.

This was why she refused to stay inside the school walls – her skin crawling and anger bubbling inside her chest until it's hard to breathe from how thick it strangles around her lungs.

"Have you heard how he snarls and grumbles – more animal than human, that one."

"Even All Might can't stand him! Muzzled him like a do-"

"Hey!" Shitty Hair's voice rings out loud, hand on his hip as he steps up beside Bakugou with a strange look in his eyes as he looks between her and the group of 1-B students. "That's not very manly behaviour!"

“It’s true though *isn’t it*,” a smarmy looking boy with blonde hair and strangely blank eyes says as he spreads his hands wide. “It was *hilarious*, wasn’t it? Really put you in your place.” Katsuki mentally dubs him as *Creep* as her hands curls into tight fists inside her pockets.

There’s something tight inside her chest, like a hand grasping and squeezing down at her heart, because these *children* are supposed to be her future co-workers and-

Something sickly twists inside of her, raw and ugly as her skin crawls like ants beneath her skin.

Is this what it’s going to be like? Katsuki thinks, hearing strangely muffled as she turns her head away to stare blankly down the corridor. *Do they really think I deserved-*

A hand lands on her arm and Katsuki flinches violently back, taking two steps as her eyes snaps up to meet Raccoon Eyes.

A sudden hush falls around them and Katsuki realises she’s trembling, breath hitching strangely and nails digging claws against her thigh inside the pocket of her jeans.

Raccoon Eyes is frowning as she reaches out once more, her movement telegraphed clearly, and Katsuki stares dully at her as she grasps for her noise cancelling headphones and very gently brings them up over her ears before stepping closer, hand curling around Katsuki’s wrist to give it a little tug out of her pocket.

She hears her say something to Shitty Hair who has his arms folded, stepping to block her from the sight of the 1-B students, but the world is muffled and her hand twitches as she turns it and grasps for Raccoon Eyes hand, staring a bit blankly at their contrasting skin.

She feels... disconnected, off, as if everything had slammed shut around her, but the hand in hers is warm and she focuses on that as Raccoon Eyes gives her a little tug, her boots dragging heavily as she follows, not sure where they’re going, quite unwilling to care if it meant getting away from other students.

The other girl stops at a door she doesn’t recognise, hand rising to knock sharply to a dull sound as Katsuki’s gaze falls somewhere at her boots, world flickering between dark boots and bare feet in straw coloured grass.

Her skin is crawling, her mind is buzzing and she’s still trembling as

Raccoon Eyes tugs her inside and pushes her down until she sinks down onto a couch.

And then Aizawa is filling her vision, crouched down, scarf tugged down to bare his mouth.

"Can I touch your hand?" he asks her, mouth moving clearly for her to read.

Katsuki opens her mouth but she can't grasp for the word so instead she raises her hand in a fist, dipping down twice in a yes.

His brows crinkles slightly and then he turns and addresses something to Raccoon Eyes who turns and hurries away and out of the door, the motion registering faintly at the back of Katsuki's mind as Aizawa reaches for the hand the pink skinned girl had been holding only moments ago and brings it to his chest, flattening it out there.

"Match my breathing," he mouths to her and she doesn't understand because she *is* breathing only-

It's coming out short and shallow, she realises distantly, and she sucks in as he makes an exaggerated motion that expands his ribs, holding it and then breathing out as she struggles to match, something ragged and raw in her throat as she does it again, fingers flexing against him, feeling the warmth through his chest, the low dull and steady *thu-thump thu-thump* of his heart beneath her palm.

It's a familiar exercise, one his parents had guided her through on more than one occasion, and her mind grasps at it, knowing what it was supposed to do, forcing her body into complying with it as the buzzing at the back of her mind slowly dulled from the franticness she'd barely been aware of.

Stupid, she thinks tiredly to herself, her eyes on the messy dark hair of her teacher, Aizawa's hand remaining grounding on top of her own even as her breathing calms into what it's supposed to be.

Lethargy creeps onto her, as it always does after one of her disassociations, though this one had been far from as bad as it could have been. There had been times when she lost complete track of her surroundings as her mind dragged her down and under.

She tugs her hand slowly away from him and he allows it without fuss.

《Thank you》 she signs, turning her head as motion registered and blinking as Present Mic stepped into the room, closing the door behind him, eyes on her hands.

《A-S-H-I-D-O said you needed my help》 he signs, fluidly in ASL, mouth moving with the words, and Katsuki jerks a bit in surprise.

《Eraserhead》 and he actually makes the sign for *Eraser*, fist rubbing against his palm and then touching his hand to his jaw and then the top of his head as is measuring in the sign for *Head* 《Is wondering how you're feeling.》

《Tired》 she informs him, the tips of her fingers touching down on either side of her chest and then roughly down in a slant towards the middle of her chest.

《Understandable》 he says with a sympathetic smile as Aizawa watches them both carefully. 《Can you tell me what happened?》

Sign-language had been her life for twenty-two years. It had taken time to get used to the noise, the sound of her own voice, trapped and unable to communicate with his parents without explanation for suddenly picking up another language entirely and she had spent her first years completely terrified someone would figure out she'd replaced a dead little boy with a dead woman.

She is old enough now that it wouldn't seem strange – the internet an easy excuse. But before Purple Guy she hadn't even made the attempt past the dark walls of her bedroom and she can't- the way Present Mic is watching her, glasses tucked away and the constricted circles of his eyes patiently on her hands-

《Panic attack》 she tells him before she can overthink it, the excuse falling easily. 《Small one》 she tacks on a bit tiredly.

《Have them often?》 he raises his brow to clarify question.

《Used to》 she admits reluctantly.

《Can you walk me through what happened?》

Katsuki's mouth flattens, hands curling in her lap and Present Mic tilts his head, the muffled sound of Aizawa's voice somewhere beside outside her reign of hearing with the headphones in place.

《A-S-H-I-D-O said that some of the other students were making remarks》 here his hand halts a bit hesitantly. 《About what happened

at the Sports Festival. »

Katsuki's shoulders draws up, tense and not at all liking the turn of the conversation.

«*Have the other students been harassing you?*» he pushes, his eyes quite serious as he meets her gaze.

And – it's so *fucking ridiculous* that she barks out a short helpless sort of laugh because *who hadn't at this point?* She scrubs her hands over her eyes, squeezing them shut behind the palms of her hands before looking up at him, trying to understand the crease of his brows and the dip of his mouth beneath that silly little moustache and-

"I'm going to take a fucking nap," she says before she draws her feet up, uncaring of the dirt beneath her boots as she slumped down against the pillow, hands pressing down on her headphones, quite done with the conversation as she turned her head away.

After a couple of minutes a blanket lands softly on her shoulders and she draws it tight around her.

-

Aizawa let's her stay for almost two hours in his office and Katsuki lies on his couch with her back towards him, not feeling like dealing with the rest of the world.

At some point Present Mic had brought her a mug of hot chocolate and her hand is curled around it, eyes focused a bit blankly at the ridiculous pattern of the couch – a mish-mash of yellow, orange and pink twisting and curling about each other, little kittens hidden in it and she finds herself touching her fingers to one sprawled out on its belly.

In her pocket had phone had buzzed several times but she can't get herself to muster up enough care to pull it out.

It's quiet – she knows that if she were to nudge her headphones off all she'd hear would be scratch of Aizawa's pen and his breathing and yet she can't muster up the energy to even do so much.

Silence had always been her safe-haven. She'd been born deaf, had spent twenty-two years without noise, and if she'd remained as she was she wouldn't have to listen to the disparaging remarks that followed her and she wouldn't have been forced to hear the laughter

of the Number One Hero as he forced the medal on her where she stood with metal biting into her jaw and mouth and wrists clasped together in a contraption befitting a criminal.

Her back knots, fingers tightening around the mug.

Heroes and Villains, that's what the world is made up of. The boy had wanted feverishly to stand tall beside his idol and instead she'd found herself shackled as he *laughed* that stupid fucking laugh that she'd plastered herself to the small computer screen in a body not her own in an attempt to *understand*.

"Fucking All Might," Katsuki hisses to herself, hating the bitter twisted curl of betrayal in her chest.

She doesn't see the way Aizawa twitches behind her, a small narrowing of his eyes as he considers her.

-

"What the fuck?" Katsuki asks a bit blankly as she stares at the car and then pauses, craning her head to look through the window as it scrolls down, Midnight peering out with a sharp grin.

"Heard you needed a ride, Bakugou-kun." She flashes her a peace sign as Katsuki glances warily back towards the school.

She could, entirely theoretically, just stay the damn night. The couch, no matter how ugly it was, had been *comfy* and Katsuki isn't picky enough to think twice about where she slept as long as she was allowed to do it in *peace*.

And nothing about stepping into the same car as her teachers to be driven home felt remotely peaceful.

She twitches at the sound of familiar footsteps behind her and takes a jerky step to the left before Aizawa's hand snags against her collar and hauls her back.

"Now, now – we're just taking you home," he drawls.

Katsuki snarls wordlessly but then Present Mic is *there* and she yanks the front door seat open and claims the passenger seat for herself, slamming it shut and glowing furiously out the window as Midnight blinked a bit in surprise before smiling.

“Aww, relax – Shou-chan is just being a worrywart and it’s our responsibility as your teachers to make sure you’re alright.”

Katsuki gives her a wary look but she looks genuine enough so she huffs and reaches for the seatbelt, tugging it in place with an aggressive *click* as Aizawa and Present Mic slid into the backseat.

“So, I heard you’re quite fluent in American Sign Language,” Midnight says after flashing her card at the gate which rose to allow them through. She’s in civilian clothing – a white tank top beneath a leather jacket, boots high and tight against her calves but with a flat low heel to it.

“What about it?” Katsuki grumbles out.

“Just curious where you picked it up,” the female Pro-Hero says easily.

“The fucking *internet* – where else?”

“Do you know JSL as well?” Present Mic, arm on the back of Midnight’s seat as he looks at her, still in full Hero-regalia, his hair pressing up against the roof of the car, and Katsuki twitches, glancing through the mirror at Aizawa who had slumped back, sipping on one of those mushy fruit pouches he seemed to have an endless supply of and apparently all too happy to leave her to the mercy of his colleagues.

“... No,” she admits reluctantly.

“Is it something you’d like to learn?” Present Mic asks, glasses dipping down just enough to give her a flash of his eyes.

Her fingers twitches.

“If you’re interested we could arrange a meeting with Nedzu about picking up JSL as an extra credit thing,” he continues with an easy smile.

“Really?” Katsuki blurts out before she could stop herself, craning around to look at him.

“You’re already fluent in English and you have top scores despite sleeping through half of my classes,” Present Mic says, looking completely unruffled by fact as Katsuki’s brows creased. “There’s no point of you sitting through something you already know, *right?*” He

says in English with a wink. “It might take me a couple of days to get it together but I’m sure Eraser will help me!”

Her homeroom teacher grunts, sinking lower against the leather of the car but it’s not a *no*.

“What do you say?” Midnight asks, glancing at her from the corner of her eyes.

Katsuki tries not to think of the softness of her scent this close – knew what hid beneath her skin and just what her quirk was capable of.

“sounds fine,” she admits a bit grudgingly, drawing tighter on herself as she sunk deeper into her seat.

-

Aizawa slouches at her side as Katsuki unlocks the door, barely getting it open before Mitsuki’s arm was circling around her, drawing her inside with her back abruptly against her front, arms folding over her chest to keep her in place.

Katsuki stares a bit blankly down at his mother’s hands.

“Aizawa-san,” Mitsuki greets as Katsuki raises her head to look for Masaru. “A pleasure to see you again.”

The scent of food is heavy in the air and Katsuki can hear the rustle and click of the stove being turned off.

“Bakugou-kun had a bit of a rough turn with some of the students outside his class” Aizawa says, straightened out to his full-height in the door-frame but leaning against it with just a brush of his shoulder. “We’re going to have a talk with our respective classes following it and he’s excused from his first-lesson tomorrow.”

This was news to Katsuki and she lifts her head, Mitsuki’s arms tightening momentarily around her.

“Thank you for bringing him home,” Masaru says as he steps out from the kitchen. “Katsuki can be a bit of a handful.”

“I’m right here,” she grumbles but can’t help the way her head tips to meet the hand stroking over her hair as he steps up beside her, craving some reassurance.

“He’s my student and my responsibility,” Aizawa says with a strange

sort of heaviness that makes Katsuki look up to meet dark eyes. "I'll do my best to make sure it doesn't happen again."

"See that you do," Mitsuki says with a tightening of her mouth.

He dips his head, sliding the door shut behind him as he leaves.

Katsuki finds herself turned around, Mitsuki sinking to her knee in front of her. "Are you alright?" she asks. "Was it—"

"I don't want to talk about it," Katsuki bites out, shoulders drawing up.

"That's fine, son," Masaru says gently. "Dinner is almost ready – why don't you join us at the table?"

"Music?" Katsuki asks as she paws a hand tiredly over her eyes.

Mitsuki's fingers brushes over her hair. "I'll turn on the radio," she says gently.

Chapter End Notes

In where everything is a bit messy and Katsuki is still raw from the Sports Festival and her near death but she's trying.

And friendship isn't easy when the one you're trying to make friends with is just a little bit Not Okay.

Featuring; adults being Adults.

I really like writing Mitsuki and Masaru with a more active role than the anime (which in all fairness focuses on Izuki). We're nearing some interesting arcs so fasten your seatbelts!

'Cause you're in for a ride.

Question: do you want me to add all active nicknames to the beginning of the chapter or would you prefer the ones only relevant to the chapter? I've gone a bit back and forth on whether it might be confusing or not.

I'm artsy-death on tumblr and this has been chapter 6 of In The End.

I hope you enjoyed!

Sixteen-Thirty

Chapter Notes

Raccon Eyes = Ashido

Punk = Jirou

Sparky = Kaminari

Purple Guy = Shinsou

Round Cheeks = Ochako

《Hey》 = sign language

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Something Katsuki thinks about a lot is *noise*.

What makes noise, what doesn't make noise, what *kind of noise*, and the things that didn't make noise despite her very sure expectations of it.

The waves lap up against her feet, her ankles, a soft rush of bubbly water.

Above her the sun is hot but quiet.

Water trails down her skin, stinging with salt in places as she shifts with a little grimace, knowing that it would dry uncomfortably with little crusts in her hair if she didn't get back and shower before school, her boxers sticky with sand from where she'd planted herself down and sure to get in uncomfortable places.

But she'd been *excused* from her first lesson and she has more time than usual to just sit and think and she's not entirely sure it's doing her anything good as she frowns out at the glitter of the water.

She's jealous.

You are friends, aren't you?

Katsuki wants to say *no*, wants to vehemently deny it – but she can't stop thinking of the way Raccoon Eyes had reached out, had known just what to do as she brought her headphones up over her ears to block the sound of the voices as her mind spiralled.

And she thinks of the knotted feeling in her chest as the door

remaining closed as she ate her lunch.

Whether she liked to admit it or not the warm feeling when Raccoon Eyes wore the tacky t-shirt she'd found in the store was a thing that was *there*. There were consideration in her actions that Katsuki seldom found among those her age (sixteen in two days, she thinks, but also thirty at the same time) and she grimaces as she drags a rough hand through her wet hair.

You should invite your friends over for dinner sometimes this week.

Katsuki has never brought friends over because there *were* none, she doesn't relate to the people around her, and being stuck around toddlers when she was mentally far much older and far more ravaged than the painfully hopeful smiles of her peers who skittered and dodged and looked at her with fear-

Her palm presses down against her ribs, fingers curling into one of the many burn marks on her chest with strange sort of frustration inside of her as she draws her knees up and rests her chin upon them.

In a world that had become too much violence remained a constant that made sense. She'd always drawn those who wanted to hurt and she'd lashed out in response, finding a twisted sort of relief in the feel of her bruised knuckles, in the flames that licked hot against her skin as Dabi met her with a far too knowing look in his turquoise eyes.

Kindness is foreign and she feels constantly guilty in the face of his parents who'd been left with remnants of something ugly and broken instead of the son that should have been. They thought her something she wasn't and she loves them but she's a liar in a dead boy's skin.

Raccoon Eyes doesn't have to care and Katsuki doesn't understand why she *does*.

She paws for her shorts behind her, pulling out the strap she secured to her bicep as she ran and wiggling her phone out from it, hesitating but then pressing the bottom button and watching it flare to life in a cast of light against her face.

There are no new messages from the pink haired girl but Katsuki scrolls up, eyes lingering on the words there.

Are you OK?

Katsuki hasn't been OK for almost eight years, not since his and her

death. Not since the violence that broke her down in the hands of a man she had loved only to drown for as he pressed a kiss to her bleeding lips as blood filled her lungs. Not since the boy had fallen off a bridge to crack his head open on a stone instead of hitting the water.

Her phone buzzes.

PURPLE GUY: the teachers are talking about you and not talking about you

Katsuki stares down at the message, a flat look stealing over her face at the ones that followed.

PURPLE GUY: i mean, it's pretty funny, because they're giving *Heroes* a whole spiel about bullying

PURPLE GUY: midoriya is looking like someone kicked a puppy right in front of him

PURPLE GUY: keeps looking to your empty desk.

PURPLE GUY: you should see the way todoroki is alternating between looking at him and glaring at your seat

Gossip, she shoots back to him.

PURPLE GUY: you turning up today?

PURPLE GUY: where do you eat lunch anyway, didn't see you at the cafeteria yesterday

Katsuki scowls.

BAKUGOU: Why do you care?

PURPLE GUY: bakugou. you cannot possible be this dense

PURPLE GUY: no, wait, it's you. nvm

A brief moment of dots jumping on the screen.

PURPLE GUY: so, tell me, how exactly would one go about telling someone in sign to unclench around the stick shoved up their-

Katsuki clicks her phone off and flops back into the sand.

It's Tuesday which means no Hero Course and Katsuki turns up in time for Math, hair still damp from her shower and dropping heavily into the seat with a brief raised eyebrow from Midnight but no comment as she continued with the lesson.

She already feels like a spectacle with the many eyes on her and she loosens the scarf wrapped around her neck as she glances towards Raccoon Eyes before her mouth curves down and she yanks the zipper of her bag open with unnecessary force, drawing out her books and letting them drop haphazardly.

Katsuki is at the top of her class in all her subjects but she'd never liked Math, even now, even if there's a reluctant sort of amusement in the fact that they'd incorporated numbers and statistics relevant for the Heroes they were supposed to become.

Just like the texts they read in English were factual tidbits and moral problems that were supposed to get them in the right thinking.

The Hero Course wasn't just a thing of a name.

It takes some digging to find her pen and eraser, always haphazardly shoved down to get caught between pages and other things she kept in her bag, but she lets it roll over the desk as she pries open the book and flips to the page number slanted on the whiteboard behind Midnight.

Her fingers drums a bit anxiously against her knee before she catches herself and curls them into a fist.

"Please pair up two and two and make your way to the end of page 62. What you don't finish today will be your homework for Friday!" Midnight says with a clap of her hands and Katsuki stiffens in her seat, glancing to Raccoon Eyes who is slowly gathering her things together and turning to look around-

Katsuki grasps for her things, books drawn to her chest and notebook crammed shut over her pen and eraser as she side-stepped Round Cheeks and hooked her ankle around a free chair, giving it a rough scrape against the floor with a clank before sinking down and letting her things drop.

Raccoon Eyes stares at her a bit wide-eyed and Sparky gives her a squinty look before turning to Punk, the two of them dropping into seat beside them.

“Partners?” she asks, tense and uncomfortable with the way Raccoon Eyes is staring at her.

“Partners,” Raccoon Eyes responds slowly as she lets her things drop, eyes assessing before turning down to the page they were supposed to be working on.

Her finger dips to the letters of the first problem, mouth opening-

“Are you free Thursday?” Katsuki blurts out.

Beside them Sparky makes a strange noise before Punk kicks him with a hiss and Raccoon Eyes gives her a downright owlish look.

“What-“

“My parents,” Katsuki forces out just a tad too aggressively. “Are having a birthday dinner. For me. I guess. And – they wanted me to invite my friends. Friend. You – I mean, if you want to.” Katsuki bites down on the inside of her cheek, ducking her head and refusing to look at the other as she glares down at the math book in front of her.

Silence ticks by and Katsuki is an *idiot* and her fingers tightens white-knuckled around her pen, a sick twisted feeling growing in her stomach with every second Raccoon Eyes doesn’t respond.

“You don’t- you don’t have to,” Katsuki squeezes out thickly, humiliation colouring her cheeks red. “Just-“

“I’d love to.”

Katsuki’s head snaps up, meeting golden in a sclera of black as Raccoon Eyes – as *Ashido* leans her chin into the palm of her hand, elbow against the table. “Sounds fun,” she says. “Want me to bring a present?”

“What-?” she says a bit weakly, distracted by the relief in her chest.

“I can’t believe you’re the oldest in the class,” Ashido pouts. “My birthday isn’t until 15th of July but you better get me a present then, alright? That’s what *friends* do.” Her eyes widen. “Do I need to dress up? Wear something fancy?”

“What, no- you’re fine as you are,” she grumbles, missing the way Ashido’s cheeks colours slightly before she coos and reaches forward to give her hair a ruffle to a twitch and a scowl.

-

“I’ve never seen someone struggle so hard in inviting someone to a birthday party,” Kaminari breathes, doing his very best to pretend he wasn’t staring at the resident hot-head. “It’s a bit sad, don’t you think?”

“Don’t let him hear you say that,” Kyoka mutters, gaze flickering between a visibly relieved Bakugou despite his grumbles and complaints as he slapped Mina’s hand aside and drew a rough line from the beginning of her calculations before starting anew, voice rolling in a grudging sort of explanation.

She had to give it to him – he knew he was talking about, enough to easily break it down despite the fact that they had only started on the chapter during the Monday lesson.

He was a strange guy to make sense of, she’d long since decided, but Mina liked him for some reason or the other and somehow she’d wormed her way beneath the skin of their violent, stand-offish and downright anti-social classmate.

Enough for him to put himself in a spot that had been so visibly uncomfortable for him that it had been nearly painful to watch.

-

“I suppose that makes sense,” Ashido hums, rubbing a hand against her chin as she considers her words.

Katsuki for her part shoves an omelette roll into her mouth, chewing as she wind ruffles her hair. It’s the middle of April, nearing summer, but the breeze is still cool enough this high-up that she’d wrapped Dabi’s scarf loosely around her neck.

“I’d like to learn,” she says next as Katsuki pauses, blinking at her. “It looked cool, you know? And I bet it’d be great for Hero work! We could talk even when we have to all undercover and be quiet and stuff.” Her eyes glitters.

“Present Mic is arranging for me to learn Japanese Sign Language,” Katsuki finds herself saying, pinching a rice ball in two with her chopsticks.

“But it’s American Sign you use, right? Then that’s what I want to learn,” she says decisively before her brows dip in a contemplative

little curve. “How did you meet Shinsou-kun anyway?”

“We stayed in the same corridor,” Katsuki says before showing rice into her mouth.

“He’s a bit strange – I don’t think he really likes anyone.” A pause. “Well, except you – obviously.” Her mouth thins. “I feel like I should make friends with him on that principle alone. We could start a club – Club Bakugou and Friends.”

Katsuki chokes on her rice. “Please don’t,” she rasps as she paws for her thermos.

“I don’t know,” Ashido says, clearly entertained. “It has a ring, doesn’t it? Do you have his number?”

Katsuki smells a disaster in the making but Ashido is already digging her hand into her pocket and Katsuki allows it with a little grumble and relinquishes her code as she steals one of the sausage squids from Ashido’s bento, the little things piled up in a corner and untouched despite nearly everything else being decimated in some way or the other.

She trades them for some fried shrimps Masaru had added that morning.

“Hey, Bakugou?”

“What?” she asks around a mouthful of squid sausage.

“Your phone is just sad.” Ashido turns it around, revealing her contact list which consisted of his parents, Aizawa, Toga’s number saved under *Freak*, Best Jeanist under *Jeans Freak*, Purple Guy and Raccoon Eyes at the bottom.

Dabi’s number remained unsaved and deleted for reasons she isn’t quite sure about anymore.

“Looks fine to me,” she mumbles.

“I’m adding Jirou and Kaminari,” Ashido says a bit decisively, fingers moving over the buttons as Katsuki gives her a long look, intent on deleting them at the earliest opportunity. “I thought for sure you’d have *at least* Midoriya saved here with the way he looks at you.”

Katsuki’s brows draws together. “I hardly know him.”

“Well, he’s clearly hung-up about you,” Ashido says a bit distractedly as she copies Purple Guy’s number to her own phone. “I thought you might have gone to middle school or something together?”

“We were neighbours until I was like, eight,” Katsuki says around some broccoli which taste surprisingly good with some sauce that she hesitantly identifies as something with curry and mango. “I changed school after the hospital and everything.”

Several times, she thinks to herself, her memories filled with gaggles of children that came and went, faceless and unremarkable.

“Hospital?” Katsuki jerks up, blinking at Ashido who is staring at her with wide eyes. “What hospital?” she demands.

“s nothing,” Katsuki mumbles.

“A hospital isn’t *nothing*,” Ashido denies, leaning forward. “Bakugou-“

“I fell off a bridge, or something, I guess,” she admits, looking away. “Broke a few bones and cracked my head like an egg.” *And died*, she thinks just a tad morbidly.

She supposes he might have been there when it happened for Midoriya is always two stops behind in every memory of the boy, bright eyed and with a smile no-matter how the boy pushed and snapped with explosions in the palm of his hands.

The boy had thought himself *better* because of his quirk but she’d lived twenty-two years in a word without quirks.

It's just genetics and shitty luck as far as she's concerned.

“Bad enough to put you in a hospital,” Ashido says and Katsuki stills as her fingers reaches out, running through the spikes of her blonde hair. “How long?”

Katsuki stares at her silently because she has no good answer to give.

The fall had killed the boy, left her in the wake.

Dead, dead, dead, dead.

She wakes up *not right* to madness and noise, wild and afraid with violence pounding deep through her being even as his parents struggled to reach through the broken pieces and pull her through.

Hospital after hospital, doctor after doctor, all of them trying to *fix her* instead of *helping her*.

It hadn't even been a full year since her last visit but these are not things she can tell Ashido.

So instead she says nothing at all.

-

We're both dead, this is the fundamental basis that makes up Bakugou Katsuki.

There are days where she wishes it'd stayed so.

-

Katsuki stares into the mirror – at the scowling face with the mess of short blonde hair, at the resentment reflected back at her in the red of her eyes. She's tall, muscles lining her body, and she touches her palm against the flatness of her chest, feeling the wet *thu-thump thu-thump* of the heart keeping her alive.

Sixteen-Thirty.

She scrubs a frustrated hand through her hair before letting it fall and reaching for the clothes Masaru had left for her.

Dark jeans, a simple white t-shirt and a ridiculous pair of orange socks that she takes some satisfaction in pulling on before sinking down on her bed and pawing for her phone with a click of the button.

It opens in the end tail of a conversation and she blinks at the message there.

PURPLE GUY: your friend is weird

Katsuki snorts before clicking out and opening out the next one.

RACCOON EYES: my mom insisted on driving me, she's very excited to meet your parents

RACCOON EYES: you better not have lied about the clothing, I hate feeling underdressed

Katsuki stares at it a bit doubtfully but then rises and faces the mirror again, making sure to keep her face out of the photo and pressing the

button before she can talk herself out of it.

She sends it without looking and backs out of the conversation, hesitating but then opening up the message from the unsaved number.

XXX-XXXXX-XX: Remember what I said.

Katsuki stares at it for a long moment, brow furrowing, before deleting it just as her phone buzzes again.

RACCOON EYES: nice abs

RACCOON EYES: be there in five

-

Ashido Mai simultaneously looks nothing like her daughter and just like her, this is Katsuki's first thought when she sees the short woman behind her— behind Ashido.

Her skin is light brown, horns curving back from her temples in a spiral of pink with little points that had been capped with metal. Katsuki guesses her an inch or so shorter than her daughter but she'd compensated it with heels, pulling off the combination of purple jeans and a buttercup yellow shirt with a sharp jacket over it.

Most notably her sclera were black, just like her daughter's, but instead of gold her eyes were pink.

Katsuki straightens from her slouch and offers her hand after his parents had invited the woman inside.

"Ah, you must be Katsuki-kun then." His parents had already invited them both to use their first names to avoid confusion and Ashido is looking positively gleeful as she swings an arm around Katsuki's shoulder.

"My bud, my friend, *Katsuki-kun*," she says with relish.

"Drop the kun," she hisses even as the woman grasps her hand in a firm grip as Ashido *Mina?* and *fuck she wasn't prepared for this.*

"Mina speaks very fondly of you," the woman, Ashido, Mai-

Katsuki's mind gives up on it, sorting Ashido's mother as *Dragon Lady* and her *friend* as *Ashido* and feels instantly better about the entire affair.

She doesn't really know what to say in response to the words and nods a bit jerkily as Dragon Lady gives her hand a soft squeeze before releasing it.

"Why don't you stay for a cup of coffee?" Masaru invites. "Give the kids some time on their own."

"I'd love to," Ashido's mom agrees instantly, already half-way out of her jacket.

"Oh! You must show me your room!" Ashido says, practically vibrating in place, and Katsuki ducks out from beneath her arm only to have her hand curling around her wrist to a twitch of her fingers as she took the familiar path down the corridor.

It isn't anything impressive but Ashido claps her hands together, looking gleeful as she practically dove for the desk, yanking the first drawer open without regard for her privacy.

The boy had crowded the room with All Might regalia and posters but she's torn it all down and hung two horror game posters which Mitsuki had bought and framed for her after an outing together some two years ago. The bed is simple, the covers blue and a small plush dolphin she'd gotten from his parents at the hospital rested on one of the white pillows, headphones dangling over the headboard.

There is a desk with a computer, a television with a gaming station and a bean bag in front of it, weights crowding in a corner and a bookshelf filled with books and comics which crowded together a bit messily where she'd shoved them in place.

A single dresser with drawers and some stuff haphazardly strewn on the top soon draws Ashido's attention and she lifts a small cat figurine with clear curiosity.

Masaru, the only one capable of keeping anything alive in the house, had added some green plants to her windowsill.

Katsuki sinks down on her bed.

"I've never been in a boy's room before," Ashido hums as she yanks Katsuki's underwear drawer open and pulls up a pair of pink ones with cat face on the left cheek with a bubble containing a slanted *meow*.

She turns around, baring them almost triumphantly, and Katsuki

raises her brow.

“Oh you’re no fun,” Ashido pouts at her. “But you have some serious underwear game...” she mutters as she reluctantly lets them drop and gives the drawer a push of her hip before practically skipping across the room to crouch down by the games, flipping through them, pausing and tugging some of them out before sliding them back. “We should game sometime,” she says. “I bet I’d beat your ass.”

“In your dreams,” Katsuki says, kicking one leg out idly.

“You know, you’re much more relaxed here,” Ashido muses. “You’re always so tense. But I guess it is your home. Oh! I almost forgot – your present!” Katsuki blinks as she practically trips over herself, her call for *Mom* ringing out loudly and interrupting the low chatter from the kitchen.

It takes a moment but then Ashido is back, kicking the door shut behind her and plopping down on the bed beside her, a package shoved into her hands.

Katsuki’s fingers curls a bit unsurely around it – the paper loud and bright, tape messily but with some care shoved in place to keep the flaps on the side in place. It’s pretty flat but broad and square where it rests on her thighs.

“I wrapped it myself,” Ashido confides, giving her a nudge with her shoulder. “Open it!”

The last time Katsuki remembers opening a present from a friend was in another world entirely and her fingers curls, paper ripping as she pried it open, not sure what to expect as a box was revealed.

She pries the flap open and tilts it, a t-shirt slipping into her lap.

The fabric is black and she tugs it up before her, blinking a bit bemusedly at the pattern on the front of it, the letters not making much sense no matter how long she stares.

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But then Ashido bounces up, yanking her sweater up over her head.

“Look!” she says, hand snapping up into a V-by her eye. “We match!” she says, clearly proud as Katsuki stares, eyes trailing down the letters of her shirt as she reads them out with her own.

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“We can wear them when we go shopping together,” Ashido says with a flash of gleaming teeth.

“No,” Katsuki denies instantly.

“You should change into it right now,” Ashido says, clearly ignoring her as Katsuki twitches. “Come on! We can take *pictures*.”

“No.”

“Katsuki,” she wheedles.

“No.”

-

Katsuki is half-wondering if she’s entered a fever hallucination as she watches Ashido sing loud and off-key with his parents at the table in front of a cake topped with sixteen candles, Dragon Lady looking far too entertained at her daughter’s side.

“Make a wish!” Ashido urges at the end of it, eyes wide and expectant as Katsuki gives the cake a wary look.

“Go on,” Mitsuki says, clearly amused.

Katsuki glowers at her but Ashido’s hopeful look registers at the corner of her eyes and she sighs as she leans forward, lungs filling up before she breathed out, getting the last one with a little huff of a breath.

“*There*,” she says, arms folding together as she slumped back.

“You know, we couldn’t put candles in his cakes after his fourth birthday,” Mitsuki says with a note of fond nostalgia. “He’d try to stick his hand right in it – nearly blew the entire thing up.”

"No," Ashido gasps with delight as Katsuki grabs for her spoon, pink creeping up her cheeks as she dug in just a tad aggressively into the piece Masaru drops onto her plate.

"Mina was a bit of a disaster herself, comes with the territory of physical quirks I suspect," Dragon Lady says with a wink as Katsuki glances up at her, reluctantly curious. "Melted right through her bed, that one. Was nearly half-way through the roof of the neighbour's apartment before she woke up."

"Mom!" Ashido squeaks.

"It's nothing to be ashamed about," Dragon Lady says with a laugh. "It's *nothing* compared to that whole disaster with the poisoned cake."

"Mom!!!"

Katsuki decides that as far as Mom's go Dragon Lady is possible the second coolest one she's ever met.

-

"I had fun," Ashido says at the end of it, tugging her boots in place and straightening up. "See you tomorrow?"

"Yeah," Katsuki mutters, a bit on edge from all the social interactions and craving her bed and headphones. "Lunch on the roof?"

"You know it!" Ashido grins, waving as Dragon Lady dipped her head, door closing behind them both.

Katsuki takes a step towards her room, halting as his father called her name and craning around.

"You did good today, son," he says with a gentle warm look that twists something inside of her. "She seems like a good friend."

"... She is," Katsuki says after a long moment. "I'm going to bed."

"Sleep well, honey," Mitsuki calls as she bends down to pick up the remains of the cake.

Katsuki grunts, kicking the door shut behind her and flopping face down onto her bed, pawing for her headphones and pulling them down over her ears.

-

Two days after the party Masaru sneaks into her room to hang a single framed picture on the wall by her bed.

A photo of Ashido and herself, arms looped together, STBE ING FUCK CHESBIT spelled out in their matching shirts, a glittery party hat sticking out between two yellow antennas, her own hanging slanted against her chest where she'd shoved it down, her face pink and glowering beside the other girl who is grinning bright and wide.

For one reason or the other Katsuki can't quite talk herself into tearing it down.

Chapter End Notes

Something a bit softer for you to chew on before we kick our way to the exams and the next big arc.

We're also bringing in Shinsou, our dude, a bit more properly - I feel a bit sorry for the guy being left to his own but Katsuki and Ashido needed to sort out some stuff and Shinsou has been busy with his own things.

I love Ashido - she's ridiculous and a bit of a dork but also very insightful. Her mother's design in inspired by some of the earlier drafts of her where she had horns.

And congrats to our protagonist for turning sixteen-thirty! What a treat.

Thank you for all your comments!! I meant to get back to them before this chapter but it's 4 am and I just finished editing it so I'm posting it and then sleeping. But love reading your responses <3

I'm artsy-death on tumblr if you're about there and this has been chapter 7 of In The End.

I hope you enjoyed!

Favours

Chapter Notes

See Through = Hagakure

Round Cheeks = Uraraka

Half-n-Half = Todoroki

Duct Tape = Sero

Froggy = Asui

Purple Guy = Shinsou

Raccoon Eyes = Ashido

Deku = Midoriya

Ponytail = Yaoyorozu

Class Rep = Iida

《Hey》 = sign-language

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

”So?”

Katsuki stares at See Through and See Through stares back. She *thinks*. For all that she knew See Through could be making faces at her, the whole *having no visible body* wasn’t exactly helpful when in body-tells or facial expressions.

As someone who had lived and relied on body-language cues for years it was fucking *eerie*. The morbid part of her can’t help but think about what it would mean for See Through to just die and get ditched – it would be next to impossible to find her.

Or maybe her quirk would cancel in death.

Katsuki can’t help but be very thankful that of all the bodies to be stuffed into it hadn’t been See Through’s. She’s not sure what kind of existential crisis she might have gone through if she woke up without a body reflected back in the mirror like a fucking *vampire*.

But she’d heard the beating of her heart, had felt her warmth, the stickiness of her blood against her hands and arms.

“What?” she grumbles, half-slumped beside the door to the boy’s changing room.

“How did it go?” See Through asks as the door behind her opens up

and Round Cheeks steps out, hand grasping at her shoulder as she rolled it in preparation for whatever All Might had in store for them. “The birthday party,” she clarifies when Katsuki keeps staring blankly at her.

“s fine,” she answers after a moment, brow creasing. “Why do you care?”

“Bakugou,” See Through says, tone making it very clear that she thought Katsuki very dumb for asking. “We faced near death together. That’s not just something I’m going to forget.”

“Going to face a lot more of those, being a Hero and all,” Katsuki says with a huff, watching through See Through as Round Cheeks seemed to deliberate for a moment before taking a step towards them.

“Bakugou-kun,” she greets.

“Bakugou is fine,” she grumps with a shift of her feet, gaze wary on the other.

For some reason this makes the girl smile at her, cheeks dimpling. “Bakugou then,” she says, clearly pleased for reasons completely beyond her. “I’ve been wanting to ask, since the Sports Festival-“ Katsuki tenses. “Would you like to spar sometime?”

Katsuki stares at her.

As does See Through, she thinks, for gloves and shoes shift in clear direction of the brown haired girl.

“Why?” Katsuki demands suspiciously.

Round Cheeks touches four of her fingers together in that particular way of hers and Katsuki wonders how long it had taken her to become habit to keep herself from floating away.

“I lost,” Round Cheeks says simply, dark brown eyes watching her with seriousness. “And I don’t like losing. I want to get better and that means I need to get stronger. *You* are strong so who better to ask?”

“That-“ See Through says with an odd undertone, speculative as her shoes squeak rather deliberately against the floor. “Is an excellent idea.”

“No thank you,” Katsuki says, pushing away from the wall she was

leaning against, uncaring of the fact that Purple Guy would be up in her face about *leaving him behind* as she took a step towards the entrance leading out to the back field.

But a hand snags around her arm and she twists around, snarling with a hard yank that only makes the grip tighten.

“Bakugou-“

“Let go-“

“Not until- oh *for-*” Katsuki finds herself nearly yanked off her feet, stumbling awkwardly and a bit wide-eyed as See Through pushes into her personal bubble with a blue gloved finger against her chest. “Would it kill you to *listen!?*” the girl demands as Katsuki stares a bit blankly through her head.

“Hagakure-san,” Round Cheeks flails a bit but Katsuki’s gaze is locked where she *thinks* the invisible girl’s face might be, chest rising and falling hard beneath the finger pressed against her ribs.

“Look,” See Through says with firmness and cooling irritation. “You saw how angry everyone got at the Sports Festival, right? In the match between you and her-“ The finger lifts to point to Round Cheeks who stills. “Like it or not we girls *are* treated differently and it’s a constant frustration to know that there are those who will always *hold back-*“

“I don’t hold back,” Katsuki says with an ugly twist of her mouth, teeth baring.

“And *that’s the point,*” See Through says, close enough that Katsuki feels the frustration huff of breath ghost against her lips. “You are the best in the class. You ranked *number one* during the Sports Festival. You beat Uraraka *fair and square*. You know it, I know it, *she* knows it.”

Katsuki’s muscles eases some, brow dipping.

“It’s a good idea,” See Through says, her grip relaxing, and Katsuki takes the chance to yank her arm free and take a step back but not away. “To train together,” she continues in a bit of a rush. “And I think you should at least hear her out.”

Katsuki doesn’t *like* See Through and it’s a strange realization that her touch doesn’t set her off the way it might normally. But the girl had laid naked and bleeding on top of her in all her invisible glory and she

scowls before turning sharply to Round Cheeks.

“Speak,” she demands gruffly.

Round Cheeks’s face does a complicated thing before determinations settles steely in her gaze and she takes a deep breath. “We have Hero Course training twice a week and it isn’t enough,” she says as Katsuki glares at her. “I – originally I just wanted to get my Hero Licence to help my parents but I want more than that. I want to *win* next time you and I face down each other.”

“You’re friends with Deku and Class Rep, why don’t you ask them?” Katsuki asks warily.

Round Cheeks blinks at the nicknames. “Deku- oh! You mean Midoriya-kun! I- He’s already training on his own with his, *friend*, I guess.” There’s a funny sort of tone to her voice when she says it and Katsuki squints at her. “And Iida’s family is from a long line of Heroes.” Which was self-explanatory in itself, Katsuki supposes, mouth flattening out.

Half-n-Half, Ponytail, Class Rep – those who already had a foot in thanks to their backgrounds, training from young age to become the best of the best. Katsuki knows that Half-n-Half hadn’t even made the entrance exam, a fact that curls heavy and ugly in her gut.

“But your parents aren’t Heroes,” Round Cheeks says simply.

“No,” Katsuki agrees slowly. “They are not.” Mitsuki and Masaru are both lawyers, his father often taken out of the country while Mitsuki dominated the home field – one of the fiercest voices in cases of quirk related abuse.

“And you don’t have a trainer.”

“No,” Katsuki agrees with a curl of her lips.

“And yet you beat them all,” Round Cheeks says, taking a step forward, something in her gaze that makes Katsuki hesitate because she *knows* that look – an unwillingness to feel small in the world that chewed and chewed at their heels because of their gender.

It’s ugly and bitter, she had lived twenty-two years with it and deaf to boot, faced with those who thought her dumb because she couldn’t hear, unwanted touches and leery eyes that dipped and lingered on her body as if they had a right to it.

As far as this world is concerned she is male – it is what she presented as and she'd long since stopped grimacing at the misgendering. But it doesn't stop her being what she *is* and her fingers twitches because she *empathizes* as much as she doesn't want to admit to it.

But she doesn't owe Round Cheeks *shit* and the words to let her know as much lingers on her tongue.

"You'd get something out of too," See Through says, as if hearing the direction of her thoughts. "You *did* nearly loose. That thing at the end? She could have won."

"I *know*," Katsuki hisses, missing the way Round Cheeks's eyes widened and See Through gave a little jerk of surprise as she turned her head to glare at the wall.

Katsuki's mind scrambles for rationality, pros and cons and then frustration that weaves through it all.

She *likes* fighting. The violence is as much a part of her as breathing, feels far more natural than the air that fills her lungs instead of blood most days and there's a *reason* she's so drawn to Dabi who meets her on her baser levels without hesitation or question, his flames licking paths up her skin in scars that will never go away, mottled and pink beneath her shirt.

What Round Cheeks is asking is *different*.

Dabi is an *asshole*. Katsuki is fairly sure he deserves *at least* half of the things she's levelled at him and she relishes in catching him off-guard, those moments where his turquoise eyes flare wide before narrowing upon her.

He's also older, late teens or early twenties when they met some four years ago and older now.

She doesn't feel remotely responsible for him.

But by directly asking her she becomes *involved* and Katsuki is busy enough with Ashido and Purple Guy in her life and she isn't interested in the implied responsibility of it all because she's *thirty* and they might not know it but it doesn't change that she *is*.

But the world believes her a sixteen-year-old boy that *that's* who they're asking to meet on their level and she doesn't know how to say no without being no better than the men that she'd spent a life time

loathing.

“*Fuck!*” Katsuki snarls. “Fucking *fine*.”

“Wait- really?” See Through blurts out.

Katsuki gives her a filthy look before glaring down at Round Cheeks. “You need to better your fucking *bases* before you can even *think* about beating me. Same to *you*.” She glowers at See Through before snapping back. “Whatever quirk you have is no goddamn excuse for not able to back up your hits so if you *really* wanna do this I’m going to run you fucking *ragged*.”

Katsuki twists on her heel.

“Find me after class if you’re serious or don’t bother,” she snarls, hand snapping out and clenching down at Purple Guy’s collar as the door *finally* opened, dragging him along to a curse and stumble that made her muscles bunch to keep him from falling over.

“See you then!” See Through hollers after her.

“You’re fucking *slow*,” she informs Purple Guy with a hiss, not bothering with signs and ignoring his startled look.

-

Katsuki ignores Half-n-Halves wary look upon her, muscles knotted tense and all too aware of the way All Might is watching her as she steps into the playing field arranged for the day’s Hero Course training with her blood thrumming for violence.

“Want me to cheer for you?” Purple Guy calls dryly behind her.

“Of course we’re cheering for him,” Ashido says beside him as he shifts to give her a twitchy deadpan look as she slings an arm around his shoulder, the other rising to her mouth. “Go, go Bakugou! Beat his ass!” she whoops loudly.

Katsuki ignores them both, the sweet scent of her quirk filling up her lungs as she flexes her hands to urge more and more of her sweat to pool.

“Let’s have a good match,” Half-n-Half says with a side-eye to Deku before settling into a steady stance.

“You better use your fire,” Katsuki rumbles in a growl.

“Make me,” Half-n-Half challenges and Katsuki focuses on the turquoise eye on the red-haired side of the boy.

“Oh I *will*,” Katsuki promises him as she bares her teeth.

“I want a fair match,” All Might says from the side-lines, smiling that infernal smile, muscled and tall in his Hero suit, eyes momentarily hard on Katsuki’s back.

She ignores him.

Ignores the calls of her classmates, the chatter and noise of their voices, doesn’t hear the silence that settles as her fingers pop with a little curl of smoke.

Katsuki is moving the second the call rings out – explosion hard enough that only hard earned muscles keep her from yanking her arms out of their sockets as she twists through the air to a brief widening of eyes and then a smooth twist, ice rising out in the path of Half-n-Half’s booted foot.

But Katsuki is already moving high, twisting, ice exploding with a roar in her ears.

Katsuki is *fast*.

She prides herself on it and Half-n-Half might be *good* but it takes little to crumble the ice that rises in her path, her boots pressing down and using the ruins of it to propel her with an explosion that rocks the very ground they stand upon as he takes a stumbling step back.

His eyes narrows and her mouth twists into a ugly fanged thing filled with violence.

-

Katsuki only has a second to register the hand that sinks through the smoke before it grasps hard on the back of her collar and by then it’s already too late – she’s hauled back, sent into a skidding backwards roll which her shoulder takes the brunt of with a hiss of her breath and a sure to leave bruise as the air is momentarily torn from her lungs.

She twists up into a skidding slide back, head rising with a snarl on her lips.

But All Might meets her gaze with hard blue eyes as rage bubbles and froths inside of her.

“The *fuck!*?” she demands.

“The match is over,” All Might repeats at her surroundings slowly creeps back to her, wary and tense and loathing the way he looks at her – as if she’s nothing more than an errant puppy that had, in some way, *disappointed him*.

As if he had the right.

Half-n-Half coughs in the smoke, sucking a hard breath, and Katsuki’s gaze flicks to him, taking in the way his arm is clearly broken and cradled against sure to be bruised ribs, maybe even cracked.

“I’m fine,” he says slowly, waving Deku away when the green haired boy hovered near him with nervous twitchy fingers. “You’re good,” he says to Katsuki, a strange sort of meaningful look in his eyes as he pushed up with air sucked through his teeth. “But then, you did first place in the Sports Festival.”

“It was a *shitty win* and you know it,” Katsuki seethes.

“You won this one fair and square,” he says with a peculiar sort of look and Katsuki’s mind halts, air leaving her with a *hiss*.

“Both of you need to visit Recovery Girl,” All Might says and Katsuki spits out a wad of blood onto the ground.

“I’m sure Bakugou can take me,” Half-n-Half says when Deku immediately volunteers. “You still have your match,” he says when Deku pauses, green eyes darting to Katsuki and then down.

“You sure?” he asks in a hushed voice and Katsuki’s fingers twitches.

“I’m sure,” Half-n-Half says, taking a step towards Katsuki who gives him a wary look. “Right?” he challenges as he takes a halting step forward before straightening up in a way that made her pause, eyes narrowing.

Used to taking pain, she thinks with a twist of her mouth.

But also - *used to hiding it*.

“Freeze burn,” Recovery Girl says, unimpressed as she considers Katsuki’s hunched figure on the bed, curtains pulled aside to give some privacy as she was immediately told to remove her shirt. “And normal burn. You kids don’t do anything by halves, do you?”

Half-n-Half’s flames didn’t burn as hot as Dabi’s but they were far more volatile, lacking the control Katsuki was used to, and they had licked hot in a flare that stretched along the outside of her arm and then a jagged line of darkly patterned skin where the ice had sealed tight and cold before she managed to get it off.

Katsuki sees the way Recovery Girl’s eyes darts momentarily between the new mark and the old ones on her skin before leaning forward as Katsuki’s muscles wired tense, a quick kiss pressed to her cheek with a *whoosh* of her breath as energy was sucked out of her and the mark *burned* before bubbling to knit shut.

She’s handed a new shirt after some prodding at her bruises as they mottled to yellow and green, her shoulder dark where she’d hit the ground but turning soft purple beneath the healer’s eyes to a sharp satisfied nod.

“And you-“ Katsuki hears as Recovery Girl rolls over to Half-n-Half as Katsuki worms her way into the shirt with a hiss of breath and a tug of some satisfaction as it settled in place, feeling far less exposed. “Bruised ribs, two of them cracked, arm broken in two places.” She *tsks*. “A person with less control would have blown it off.”

Katsuki could have but she isn’t a *monster*.

No matter what these Heroes seemed to think of her.

She gives Half-n-Half enough privacy for the use of Recovery Girl’s quirk before yanking the curtain aside, meeting the mismatched eyes that are already watching her, a button-up shirt half-made up his chest.

“You’re not going anywhere,” Recovery Girl warns her when her feet dips to slide off. “There is a monitor if you want to watch the rest of the matches but you’re staying here until lunch.”

“That’s fine,” Half-n-Half answers as Katsuki glowers but reluctantly eases back, drawing one foot up and tucking it beneath her thigh as the Hero gave a push of an old thing and plugged it in before disappearing into her office with one last warning look at them both.

“You’ve fought against someone with a fire quirk before.”

Katsuki blinks, turning to scowl at the other.

“I thought I might have been mistaken at the Sports Festival,” Half-n-Half says with a roll of his shoulders, his face giving nothing away to any sort of pain. “But fire quirks are pretty rare and despite that you clearly got more comfortable once I started using mine.”

Katsuki’s eyes flickers momentarily to the mottled scar over his turquoise eye before turning away as Duct Tape stepped up to face Froggy. Both long-range, both with quirks that made Katsuki’s insides twist up uncomfortably.

“It’s pretty surprising,” Half-n-Half continues, not at all dissuaded. “I know you’re not familiar with my father and neither Fuyumi or Natsuo are very interested in fighting.” There’s a strange sort of thing creeping into his voice, something *hopeful* that makes Katsuki’s shoulders tense a bit warily as she flicks her gaze to him. “Have you – I mean, does the name *Touya* mean anything to you?”

Katsuki looks at him – her gaze resting heavy on the mismatched eyes that meets hers without fear.

“No,” she tells him slowly as his eyes narrow suspiciously. “Never.”

-

“You all healed up then?” Ashido asks brightly as Katsuki steps through the roof door, pausing as the sight of her *and* Purple Guy registered.

The purple haired boy had crammed himself into the corner, folded over with his elbow on his knee and with a tray of cafeteria food balanced on his folded leg, chopsticks decimating something that might have been fish to mix together with the rice and vegetables.

She meets his eyes for a moment, brow furrowing as he straightened out almost challengingly.

“Yeah,” she grunts, kicking the door shut behind her and ambling over with one hand shoved into her pocket to sink down where Ashido patted at the ground beside her and slumping back against the fence, twitching as fingers prodded over the bandages Recovery Girl had wrapped in place around her arm.

《Congrats on your win》 Purple Guy signs to her.

Katsuki ignores him, tugging at her backpack and digging for the bento Masaru had packed for her.

“Shinsou went up against Tokoyami and Dark Shadow,” Ashido informs her as Katsuki pops it open. “It was a bit sad to watch.”

“Oi,” Purple Guy protests. “I can’t help that my quirk isn’t very physically orientated. We can’t all generate explosions or acid on demand.”

“True,” Ashido says with some smugness as Katsuki glances at them both, headphones dangling around her neck and once again back in her school uniform.

“Aizawa doesn’t have a physical quirk,” she says as she shoves a fried shrimp into her mouth, twisting down and dropping the tail back into the box.

“Oh! Ashido nearly inhales a mouthful of noodles. “You should get like a weapon or something,” she says through a mouthful before swallowing. “Aizawa-sensei’s capture weapon is *so cool*. I have no idea how he controls it but remember USJ?” She gives a low whistle. “Our sensei is the *coolest*.”

Katsuki senses eyes upon her and glances towards Purple Guy whose gaze is strangely intense, a question in the brow that rises up.

“You can only control one person at the time,” Katsuki says dryly, even as wariness twists inside of her.

“Katsuki-“ She twitches at the use of her name and at the feel of the arm that drapes around her shoulders. “Knows I’ve got his back.” A hand squeezes against her bicep which tenses before Ashido draws back. “And anyway, you’re part of the club, right? So you wouldn’t use your quirk on us,” she says breezily.

“Club?” Purple Guy asks as he piles together a lump of rice and fish.

“Club Bakugou and Friends,” Ashido says happily.

“I will stab you,” Katsuki tells her point-blank with a twitch of her brow.

“It’s a horrible name,” Purple Guy says with a snort of derision. “You

should name it something like – *Club Anti-Social Wreck and Friends*,” he says with some relish.

“For *fucks* sake-“

“It’s a good name,” Ashido says with some consideration. “A bit long though,” she says with a touch of reluctance.

“We’ll figure something out,” Purple Guy says as he grimaces around the food, looking none-too-happy about the fish despite having done his best to hide it in the rice.

“I hate both of you,” Katsuki informs them with a scowl.

“Sure you do,” Ashido agrees.

“Filled with wrathful rage you are, I tremble,” Purple Guy deadpans. “Did you bring the notes? I was serious about my question and we got to figure out a good name for Midoriya. I’m thinking-“ He twists his hands as Katsuki stares at him.

“Oh! I recognised green,” Ashido says as she leant forward. “What was the other one?”

“Bean,” Purple Guy says as he repeats it. “Cause of his hair and he’s just... a bean.”

“What about me?” Ashido demands, gaze darting sharply and expectant to Katsuki whose fingers twitches.

Slowly she raises her hand up, index and middle-finger up, the others folded down, flicking the middle one twice against her jaw before shifting into a combination.

“Pink... something, person,” Purple Guy identifies slowly.

Katsuki shows them both the sign again. “Outer Space and Person,” she says, watching Ashido carefully. “’s a combination.”

“Like – like an *alien*?” Ashido ventures slowly. “Pink alien?”

Katsuki shrugs a bit uncomfortably, grabbing for her chopsticks.

“Because I wanted my Hero name to be *Alien Queen*,” she says with a widening of her eyes. “You – *aww*, Katsuki you’re suck a *softie*. Show me – one more time!” she begs, hand rising up in a clumsy echo. “Like this?”

“Index finger out more,” Katsuki corrects with a little crawl of colour up the tips of her ears.

“So?” Ashido asks seriously.

Katsuki had been allowed her Hero name but Midnight had point blank dismissed Ashido’s first choice and she’d eventually settled for Pinky but she hadn’t been happy with it and Katsuki had watched but not commented even as her chest twisted a bit uncomfortably.

“What was up with Hagakure and Uraraka earlier?” Purple Guy asks after Ashido had the sign down, repeating it to herself with a small smile. “They had him cornered outside the changing rooms,” he says to Ashido when her gaze flicks up.

“Nothing,” Katsuki growls, stabbing a bit too aggressively through an omelette roll.

“You were angry,” Purple Guy says as Katsuki glowers at him. “That wasn’t *nothing*.”

“Was it about the Sports Festival?” Ashido asks sharply, suspicion filling her gaze.

“The fuck does it *matter*?”

“Because you’re our *friend*,” Ashido says just a tad exasperatedly as Purple Guy shrugs with a gesture of his chopsticks to the pink haired girl as if to say *you heard her*. “Aizawa-sensei was really upset about – you *know*.” She shifts, shoulder pressing against Katsuki’s. “Is this because she lost?”

“No,” Katsuki mumbles with a twist of her mouth. “Yes. I-“ She lets out a harsh sigh. “Round Cheeks-“

“That’s Uraraka,” Ashido informs Purple Guy.

“-Made an argument for something and then See Through-“

“Hagakure,” Ashido says, popping a vegetable roll into her mouth.

“-wanted the same thing,” Katsuki pushes out with an annoyed twitch of her eyebrow.

“Do you call anyone by name?” Purple Guy asks before his face twists with revelation “Wait – what’s mine?”

“Purple Guy,” Ashido informs him before Katsuki can do much more than open her mouth. “Don’t take it to heart, he’ll be calling you by your name before you know it.” She gives him a pat on the shoulder. “So, what did they want?” she asks expectantly.

“Fuck if I’m telling you *Raccoon Eyes*,” Katsuki hisses.

Chapter End Notes

I meant to do something else entirely with this chapter and yet here we are.

Both the exam and then the summer training camp are going to be pretty big arcs so I'm handling some things before that to establish some grounds and what's going on in the class and with Katsuki.

So, anyway, prepare for class 1-A to just take up more space in general.

And Shinsou... yeah. Things are gonna be picking up because there's a lot of things going on in the background.

Thank you sooo much for your comments!! I try to go back and respond with the uploading of a new chapter so I don't miss anyone. Right now I gotta walk my dog and then maybe nap but then I'm getting right to it.

I read and reread them all and I adore you guys.

I'm artsy-death on tumblr if you're about there and this has been chapter 8 of In The End.

I hope you enjoyed!

Saturday

Chapter Notes

Punk = Jirou

Shitty Hair = Kirishima

Sparky = Kaminari

Purple Guy = Shinsou

《Hey》 = sign-language

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Dabi isn't answering her messages.

Katsuki scowls down at her phone, scrubbing a small towel over her damp hair, slinging it around her shoulders as she ambled into the kitchen, sinking down roughly.

“Any plans today?” Masaru asks her as he slides her breakfast in place, apron around his waist and oven glove still on his right hand. He's a tall guy, broad chested with messy brown hair and yet his face is always gently and his eyes kind behind dark framed glasses.

There are few days he doesn't make her feel insanely guilty about her very existence.

“Dunno,” she admits, grabbing and digging her fork side-ways through one of the eggs, staring down at the objectively healthy meal, vegetables and meat alike for a growing body that burned through a lot of calories without robbing it of taste and enjoyment. “Two of my classmates asked me for help with training,” she finds herself saying, flicking her gaze up to watch his expression.

But Masaru merely hums. “I take it you agreed to it?”

“They were... insistent,” she says a bit grudgingly. “Made a good case for it.” She shovels some egg into her mouth, chewing as he peeled the glove off and put it down beside him as he settled down in the chair opposite her where a pot, mug and a package of tea is already waiting.

“Do you want to help them?” he asks and she blinks before frowning.

“... I do,” she says finally with a furrow in her brow. “But I don't

know *how*.”

“You’ve always had good instincts,” Masaru says as he pours the hot water into the cup after picking one of the small square packages and tearing it open. “You get that from Mitsuki.”

Katsuki ignores the small warm glow in her chest at his words as she swallows. “They need to get stronger.”

“Physically or mentally?”

“Both? I guess?” Katsuki ventures after a moment. “Uraraka-“ It never gets strange forming her classmates names but she swallows down the discomfort of it. “She’s strong but she’s obviously never had a proper fight before U.A, lacks the instincts for it. Hagakure is... trickier.”

“Trickier how?” he asks her calmly as he tips two cubes of sugar into his tea.

“She’s *invisible*.”

Masaru pauses. “Ah, that one,” he says contemplatively.

“Hell if I know how strong she is and I can’t make a judgement of something I can’t *see*.”

“Language,” he chides her and Katsuki grumbles but ducks her head. “Where do you think you should start?”

Katsuki’s brow creases. “Establish where they are at now?” she ventures after a moment, rolling a piece of meat on her fork. “What they eat, what they already *do*? A spar?”

Masaru smiles at her. “Seems like a good start as any,” he says and Katsuki *harrumphs*.

She gets the dishes up with a bit of a juggle before letting it drop into the sink, turning the water on and grabbing for the dish-brush and dumping a healthy amount of soap into it, watching as it froths and bubbles in the hot water.

“Where is kaa-san?” she asks as she twists the dish-brush into the bottom of her glass, making sure to rinse it free from suds before placing it on the rack to dry.

“She’s out with some friends,” Masaru says with a rustle of his newspaper. “She won’t be home until late. I’m going to head out in a

bit – need to finish up a thing in the office. I’m not sure when I’ll be back but I’ll transfer you some money for dinner.”

Katsuki drops the fork and unused, but cleaned, knife in place.

“I’m heading out,” she informs his, drying her hands.

“Son?” She pauses, tilting her head to indicate she was listening. “If you’re not busy mind doing your old man a favour?”

-

Katsuki squints at the different fabrics – colours and patterns, some rough, others impossibly soft when she reaches out and rubs tryingly at a patch of orange.

She’s already got five rolls piled onto her shoulder and she draws it out, twisting a bit to get it up on top before moving deeper into the store in hunt for yarns.

What, exactly, the project his father had in mind he hadn’t been inclined to share – just handing her a list of colour and measurements with a relieved little smile. It made the shopping just a tad harder but Katsuki was determined to at least *try* at getting it right.

She ends up piling together a handful of yarn into a basket she finds before dropping the rolls of fabric down before a young woman who blinks at her as Katsuki paws at her back pocket, pulling the note out.

“This much of them,” she says just a tad gruffly.

“Of course, sir,” she agrees easily, rolling the first one out and pulling for a measuring tape that Katsuki watches carefully, admiring the smooth straight lines of the scissor that followed with practical ease before it was folded up, note stuck in place on top before the next one went through the same procedure.

Katsuki dips her head with a *thank you* and drags it all over to pay.

-

It’s still early and feeling restless she stuffs the plastic back into her backpack and shoulders it on before heading out to the park where she buys herself an ice cream before making her way to the arcade.

She’s two steps in and then one step out of the thing before her name registers. *Loudly.*

Cursing internally she slowly turned around.

“I didn’t know you liked games!” Shitty Hair says with a broad sort of smile, shark-like teeth flashing, the machine in front of him flickering with light, a loud disappointed noise and droning *Game Over* easily ignored. “Do you want to join us?”

“No,” Katsuki denies instantly.

“You sure?” Punk asks, leaning lazily against the thing. “Afraid we’ll beat you? Reveal just how *bad* big snarly Bakugou really is?” Her headphone jack flicks tauntingly down her front and Katsuki twitches.

“I’ll show you,” Katsuki snarls, tugging her backpack off and shoving it roughly at Shitty Hair before weaving her way deeper in search of the counter, slapping a handful of cash down to exchange for play tokens.

She ends up with more than she means and mutters as she scoops them up and shoves them down her pocket with a clink and rustle.

Sparky waves for her at a shooting game and Katsuki hesitates for just a moment before scowling and making her way over, spying Shitty Hair and Punk in queue for a loud blaring DANCE DANCE REVOLUTION thing that she wants no part of.

“I have to warn you,” Sparky says with a twirl of his plastic red gun. “I’m *good*.”

“I’m *better*,” Katsuki informs him with a flash of teeth, anticipating worming through her as she grabs for the yellow one.

It’s a zombie game, the rotten bodies groaning and lurching towards the screen only to fall at their bullets but it doesn’t take long before the big boss mauls them both to bits and they stare in silence as their protagonists are hauled up and choked down into a gaping maw.

“Ah,” Sparky says as he raises a hand as if to cover his eyes while leaving his fingers spread to watch through. “That’s... brutal.”

“You didn’t cover my back,” Katsuki says with a twitch of her shoulders.

Sparky hums, thumbing his weapon thoughtfully. “You didn’t cover mine,” he says with an easy little shrug.

They exchange looks, the silent understanding of poor losers settling between them, and Katsuki digs for another coin, shoving it in in tandem with his.

“We take his knees and elbows-“

“- and then we take his *fucking* head,” Katsuki finishes as they raise their guns up.

-

Katsuki finds herself tugged between games – absolutely mauling Shitty Hair in a game of fighting only to lose badly in a crappy rhythmic game which involved far more spins than Katsuki thought reasonable as Shitty Hair crooned out the lyrics in something distinctively Korean as she gave-up half-way to watch him with morbid fascination.

She wasn't the only one – he had a small crowd going at the end of it, rubbing at the back of his neck as he was bid to enter his name onto the flashing screen.

Katsuki stares as he enters KIRI, watching it shoot onto third place onto the top-five scoreboard alongside the other identical rows of letters.

She gives him a flat look.

“Jirou is better, but she hates these kind of games,” he says a bit sheepishly. “She has the high-score on DDR though.”

Punk favoured the fighting games as well, her fingers moving quickly and palm slamming down in a combination that makes her character practically bend its back to slam Sparky's down on its head to a cry of *unfair* while the girl smiled smugly with liquid satisfaction oozing from her as her character made a crude winning gesture with a roll of its hips.

Sparky combs home rows and rows on tickets on a basketball thing with ease and Katsuki takes a moment to watch him before weaving deeper and finding a motorcycle game which makes her pause.

A sharp sense of longing almost threatens to overwhelm her she finds herself reaching out, despite knowing it was nothing more than wires and plastic, cheaply made leather and metal footrests.

“You a fan?” Punk asks behind her. “It’s nothing like the real thing, of course.”

Katsuki says nothing, fingers drawing back.

“You know, I didn’t think you’d stick around,” Punk says with a peculiar sort of tone as she steps past, aiming for the row of claw games crowding at the very back, fingers gliding down the glass boxes before she pauses at one. “You keep surprising me.” Her eyes glints in the light of the machines as she turns around. “I hear you’re fancying yourself a teacher these days.”

Katsuki’s mouth curls up, shoulders bunching tight.

“Jealous?” she gets out, stuffing her hands deep into her pockets and flattening her sweaty palm against her legs to ease the sweet scent of her quirk. “That they didn’t ask *you*?”

“You wish,” Punk says with a snort, turning and pushing a coin into the slot with a *whirr* of the claw as it jerked into movement. “Suspicious that you said yes however? Sure.”

Katsuki gives the back of her head a flat look.

“If you want me to leave you can just fucking say it,” Katsuki says as the claw folds around nothing before pulling up. “I detest verbal games.”

Punk shrugs. “It was fun,” she says and she honestly seems to *mean it*, her eyes peculiar but not hostile when they glance momentarily back. “We should to it again.”

Katsuki watches the claw fold on nothing again before stepping forward to Punk who pauses but steps aside, coin already in place as she twisted the claw into movement, picking carefully before pressing down on the bright red button.

It lowers down, folding around the neck of a bright blue stuffed ferret, weak but snagging at the band there when it threatens to fall and they both watch it being lifted into the air and dangling precariously towards the plastic box where it falls with a soft sound down against the lid.

Punk crouches down, fishing it out.

“I don’t get you,” she says as she straightens out. “But I don’t dislike

you. Don't know you well enough to make a call either way but something I know? That temper of yours – it's dangerous."

"You think I'm going to hurt them," Katsuki says flatly.

Punk waves her hand. "Hagakure, Ashido, Uraraka – they can take of themselves." She leans back against the machine. "But indulge me because I can't wrap my mind around it. *Why* do someone like you want to become a Hero?"

"Someone like me?" Katsuki repeats, nails digging hard against her thigh even as she remains slouched, red eyes meeting black. "As opposed to what – someone like *you*?"

For some reason this makes the other girl's mouth twitch.

"You know, you'd like great with some eyeliner. It'd really bring out that glare of yours." Katsuki's mind halts and before she can wrap her mind around the words Punk shoves the blue ferret against her chest and side-steps her. "Hey, Kirishima! I have a bone to pick with you since our last race!" she hollers, drawing more than one irate look from the workers as she ambled away.

Katsuki twitches, gaze darting down to the beady plastic eyes of the creature in her arms.

-

Katsuki stares down at Purple Guy and Purple Guy *does not* look back, struggling to draw breath as he is, clutching at his bruised throat, hunched over in a way that indicated some sort of problem with his ribs where he sits slumped against the alleyway wall like a wheezing wet cat.

Because this fucking Saturday couldn't get any weirder, Katsuki thinks to herself, flexing her stinging knuckles and threading deliberately on the groin of the only attacker who'd stuck around once her quirk flared, grinding her heel in momentarily before crouching down before her classmate.

"Leave me *alone*-" Purple Guy spits at her after several moments, his purple eyes dark. "**Leave!**" he says louder, hoarser, only to fall into a fit of coughing that makes his head loll against the bricks once it stops, exhaustion in every line of his body.

Katsuki's mouth flattens, fingers drumming against her thigh as she

deliberates before she paws for her phone, pressing the button and scrolling through the short list contacts she had saved.

Dabi's number blinks at the top, unanswered, and she deletes it before pressing a hence unused number and lifting it to her ear.

It takes three rings, Purple Guy glaring daggers at her all the while, before a grouchy tired voice picks up at the other end.

"Who is this?"

"Aizawa-sensei," she greets and Purple Guy makes a violent sort of lurch towards her only to have his hand caught and squeezed in her grip with a twist that draws a noise of pain out of him.

"Bakugou," Aizawa's voice comes low, cautious. *"Is there a problem?"*

"Depends on what you classify as a problem," she says, meeting Purple Guy's eyes keenly, daring him to make another movement. "I do have one of your students wheezing for breath in an alley. Three assailants, one out cold, the other two booked it."

There's a rustle of movement, a low murmur of a voice in the background that Katsuki can't quite identify.

"Where are you?" he demands next, any sign of tiredness gone from his voice.

Katsuki lifts her gaze, squinting at the sign there before rattling off the street number.

"Is it safe to remain where you are?"

"Yes," she says after a decisive look at the unconscious man. "A bit wet."

"A bit wet," Aizawa's voice comes flat through the phone.

"It's raining," she informs him just as the first drops hits her nose.

-

Katsuki hauls the man onto his front, rummaging through her backpack for the zip ties she kept there, mindful to keep it tipped from the worst of the rain with her purchases still in place.

She places a knee on the man's back as she draws his arms back,

pulling it sharply in place after placing the back of his hands flat together.

She uses the other three to make a looping band that she secures to the rain drainage on the ground after a bit of yanking and manoeuvring, the steady thrum of the rain picking up until it's downright pouring.

She rubs her hand against the front of her pants, smudging the remains of her quirk in a way that his parents would have scolded her for.

To Aizawa's credit it hasn't been more than fifteen minutes before a silvery car rolls up and he steps out, Katsuki blinking wet eyelashes as Midnight followed from the driver's seat with keen eyes as both Pro-Heroes took in the situation.

Purple Guy curled against the wall, bruised and wet and struggling for breath with blood trickling from a broken nose, Katsuki seated on the back of the unconscious assailant, fingers fiddling absently with the strap of her bag.

Aizawa makes his way past her in three long steps to crouch down before Purple Guy and Katsuki looks up at Midnight as the woman unfolds an umbrella above her.

"Police will be here in a moment," she says, eyes on Aizawa and Purple Guy. "Have you called your parents?"

"Out," Katsuki informs her plainly. "Shot them a message I'd be late."

"Good," she says. "Wait in the car. There's a towels in the backseat."

Katsuki pushes to her feet, snagging her backpack along and circling around the car to the passenger seat, giving Purple Guy one last lingering look before slipping inside, reaching behind her and drawing a pink towel with kittens on over her head as she slumps back, head tilting against the leather to watch the rain fall.

-

Katsuki finds herself in her teachers' apartment, head craning around a bit absently, towel around her shoulder and her clothes so wet it meant little in the grand scheme of things. She wonders if she's supposed to be surprised by the fact that Midnight and Present Mic and Aizawa were either dating or just comfortable enough to share the

same living space.

But apathy had settled somewhere with the first rain and she's hard-struggled to feel much at all.

Purple Guy had been lead to the shower, Aizawa's hand remaining on his shoulder until the door closed shut quietly and he straightened up, dark eyes turning towards her.

"What happened?" he asks, voice heavy, and Katsuki gives a shrug.

"They were beating him up. I stepped in. He wasn't too happy about it."

He hums, the noise low, strangely comforting as he sinks down beside her as the shower turns on.

"And what about you?"

She gives him a blank look. "I wasn't the one beat up," she says.

"You're distant," he informs her.

"It's raining," she tells him, turning her head away from his searching eyes.

"So you told me." A moment, a tick of a heartbeat, and then a hand was very gently settled on her shoulder and she gives a small jerk before stilling, muscles tensing beneath his touch and then slowly relaxing when it remained, steady fast and grounding. "You did well," he tells her. "Thank you for calling me."

"You gave me your number."

"I did," he agrees. "Come – you can borrow some of my clothes."

-

Aizawa's clothes are *soft*.

Katsuki kind of want to keep the hoodie he gives her, pink with little kitten ears, the sweatpants dark and comforting against her skin.

She wonders if she can get away with keeping them.

Or just not giving them back.

She lifts her gaze, staring at the mirror – at the drooping hair and blank red eyes, mouth flat and refusing to move into as much as a scowl as she searches for the correct muscles without finding them.

“Bakugou?” It’s Midnight and she raises her head, craning to look at the woman. “Hot chocolate or tea?” the Pro-Hero asks.

“Chocolate,” Katsuki answers after a moment.

Midnight lingers, her eyes a very dark blue that searches hers carefully. “Want to help me make it?”

Katsuki blinks at her and then nods.

She’s set to stirring the milk and the melting bits of chocolate together – the smell wafting sweet, different from her burnt undertone of her quirk.

Midnight is digging through the pantry and Katsuki slants her a look, lingering on the swell of her chest in the white tank-top.

Distantly Katsuki hears the wet choking of lungs drowning in blood, slow and agonizing with tears and no voice to be heard. The sound is something that she’d only heard at the very end and she wonders if they’d been connected even then – the dead boy and the dying woman.

Can almost hear the whisper of the man who she’d loved as he pressed his lips against her mouth, achingly familiar in the way they moved against her cold ones.

A hand presses against her forehead and she blinks up at Midnight, lethargic and off as she presses just an inch closer, eyes flagging shut.

“Your phone has been ringing,” Midnight says quietly.

It takes a second but then- “Probably tou-san or kaa-san,” she manages. They knew how she got in the rain and she isn’t particularly surprised but she can’t dredge the motion or care to answer.

“Want me to take it?”

She dips her head, palm sliding briefly over her hair before her arm was given a little nudge in reminder to stir and the phone slipped out of her pants as Midnight took a step away from her, voice somewhere behind her, distant, as if her hearing was failing her.

The stove is turned off with a click and Katsuki relinquishes the wooden spoon, allowing herself to be shepherded to the couch and pushed down, a cup of chocolate soon pressed into her hands.

“Your parents didn’t want you to spend the evening alone,” Midnight informs her as she takes a seat beside her. “And I have to agree with them so you’re spending the night here. Shinsou-kun as well if we can’t get hold of his foster parents.”

Katsuki makes a noncommittal sound, aching for something beyond her mind’s ability to verbalize as she slowly draws the cup up to take a sip.

It’s good – sweet and warm but she just feels cold and strangely empty.

“Bakugou.” She looks up. “I might be pushing my boundaries with you here but – you look like you need a hug.”

“I-“ Her tongue feels thick and leaden in her mouth and the world tips a bit oddly, a tremble running through her. “I don’t-“ Something twists in her chest and the scent of burnt sugar mixes with the chocolate as her fingers claws against the ceramic.

“It’s okay,” Midnight says gently, tugging the cup out of her hands and placing it onto the table before hands were very softly brushing over her hair. “Shinsou is safe – you got to him in time.”

Katsuki’s breath jags in her chest and she tastes iron on her tongue.

The thing is that if Masaru hadn’t asked her to run the errand, if she hadn’t run across Sparky, Shitty Hair and Punk at the arcade, then she wouldn’t have been there at all.

The noise had registered when she was making her way home – the sound of flesh being struck and the wet desperate choking of someone being quieted had made her turn on her heel, palms growing slick as anticipation for a fight licked through her.

She hadn’t been prepared to see *him*.

Pressed up against the bricks, hand around his throat, bruised and hurt and frightened beneath the desperate anger in his gaze as the tip of a knife dug into the soft skin of his throat-

The very tips of Midnight’s fingers presses gently against Katsuki’s

skin, the touch nearly scalding against the coldness of her own.

It's raining.

Dead, she thinks. *I'm de-*

There's a shift and Katsuki finds hands sliding beneath her armpits, hauling her up with surprising strength as she twists, awkward and clumsy in her own body as she's drawn into strong warm arms, a hand settling gently against the back of her neck, pressing her closer as Katsuki's hand curls loosely into the fabric of the back of her tank top.

A part of her is screaming, the other is drowning and she turns her head, pressing closer as a tremble runs through her.

Because she'd almost been too late.

And it's raining.

-

It had been raining when she died, too.

-

"Asleep?" Shouta asks tiredly, the evening feeling impossible long with Shinsou finally asleep in the guest bedroom and his normally volatile student pressed up against Nemuri as she stroked gently through his hair.

There'd been something severely disturbing about seeing the normally angry boy staring blankly up at him with apathetic eyes, so lost and for reasons completely beyond him.

Sleep suits him far better.

She nods.

"Did his parents give any reason for it?" he asks as she sinks down on the couch beside them both, curbing the strange urge to reach out and grasp the lax hand beside her in his own.

Bakugou's face is pressed against Nemuri's neck, chest rising and falling slowly in deep sleep. He looks young, dressed in one of Shouta's favourite hoodies, the colour soft against his skin and his face, for once, not twisted up in the anger that seemed constant and volatile in him.

Shouta had never liked feeling useless and now he's got two problem children on his hands and not sure where to even begin with either of them.

"Just that he doesn't like the rain," she answers quietly. "They were both very worried." This, at least, eases something inside of him – Shinsou's foster parents hadn't even answered and the boy hadn't looked surprised about it.

Aizawa doesn't particularly like the implications of it.

"This kind of reaction – it isn't normal." There's a look in her eyes that he's well familiar with and Shouta doesn't allow his gaze to dip to the hand curled protectively against the boy's neck or at the fingers still running through his hair.

He knows his partners – knows that this isn't something Nemuri will allow herself to just walk away from. It's too close now, personal. Perhaps the signs of it had already been there, with Hizashi going out of his way to turn their bedroom upside down in hunt for all his notes on JSL and hunkering down after his long radio shifts to cobble together a lesson plan when he was already balancing three works.

"No," Shouta agrees heavily. "It isn't."

"What are we going to do?" Nemuri asks as the boy shifts, pressing closer to a brief stilling of her hand before she resumed stroking his hair, something soft fluttering briefly through her eyes.

"What can we do?" Shouta asks tiredly. "I read his files," he tells her. "There was an incident when he was eight – fell off a bridge, nearly died. And after that there's just record after record of therapist and advice on a boy completely changed. There is nothing to points to *why*. No explanation at all."

"Nothing?" Nemuri asks, hand tightening. "Something before the accident?"

"Possibly," he says but he honestly doesn't know. The sheer level of trauma implied in the clinical notes had been disturbing to read and he recalls the phone call from Best Jeanist after the internship – the regret in the Number Four Hero's voice, the worry hidden in his questions, and the peculiar note in his voice when he asked about the Sports Festival.

Shouta had revisited the tapes after Bakugou Mitsuki's visit to the

school and his chest had clenched uncomfortably at the way her son had fought and struggled, eyes screaming for help and with a whole arena filled with Heroes who hadn't bothered to answer him.

"We should sleep," he tells her finally.

"They said he didn't like waking up alone," Nemuri says, eyes searching his.

Shouta rubs at his neck. "The bed is big enough, I suppose," he says with a sigh.

It takes some manoeuvring but Shouta finds himself with an armful of sleeping student as Nemuri texts Hizashi to let him know about the situation since he wouldn't be home for another hour yet.

The boy is solid and for someone who reacts so volatile to touch he curls close almost instinctively in his sleep as Shouta carries him down the hall and nudges the covers aside with his knee before placing him down.

There's nothing conventional about the solution but he's tired and it's late and he'd either have Nemuri in bed or asleep on the couch. There's a second bed in the guestroom but it'd be unfair on Shinsou who was already dealing with his own things and something had clearly gone down between the two, one-sided as it appeared to be.

He rummages for a pair of pants and a shirt, Nemuri doing the same when she slipped into the room, and they change quietly in the stream of light from hallway.

Shouta had placed the boy at the end of the bed but the moment Nemuri wormed down beside him he was turning towards her and she draws him up just enough to let him rest against her shoulder as she tucks the covers around them both.

"He'll be angry," Shouta warns her as he flops down beside her.

"I'll deal with it," she promises him quietly. "He responds better to females anyhow."

"I'd noticed," Shouta says just a tad dryly for all that the implication didn't sit well with him. "He's close to Ashido."

"She's good for him," Nemuri says and he hums.

Chapter End Notes

Because sometimes things just strike a bit too close to home.

Nothing is easy and Aizawa has a lot to figure out when it comes to Katsuki. As does Midnight and Present Mic and there's a long journey ahead.

As promised - Shinsou! Because Katsuki isn't the only one with problems even if it's her journey we're focusing on. But there are adults to Adult, unconventional as it might be, but this is the world of Heroes and Villains and not so Okay people.

I'm a wee bit behind on responding to you guys and I do apologize for that - I had a gaming day with a friend and got home late so I focused on cleaning this up before heading to bed. But I have a couple of hours tomorrow so I'll catch up then! Absolutely adore reading your comments - insightful and so very encouraging and makes it so fun to write and share this with you all.

I'm artsy-death on tumblr if you're about there, don't be afraid to ask questions if there's anything you're curious about.

I hope you enjoyed!

Aftermath

Chapter Notes

See Through = Hagakure

Purple Guy = Shinsou

Round Cheeks = Uraraka

Punk = Jirou

Shitty Hair = Kirishima

Sparky = Kaminari

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Katsuki is warm.

The sensation registers strange. Off.

Wrong.

The memory of rain dredges thick through her mind and she shivers despite the heat, prying her eyes open as her nose flares, a soft scent filling her nose where it's pressed up against something that slowly registers as skin.

She stills and then her muscles knot up and the arm around her tightens momentarily before loosening as Katsuki pushes up, feeling weak limbed and heavy.

Confusion and a different sort of emotion claws for her attention as she straightens up until she sits astride the body below her.

"You're in our apartment," Midnight tells her, watching her, hand reaching out to turn the lamp on as Katsuki blinks at the low cast of light. "Do you remember what happened yesterday?"

No.

Yes?

"It was... raining," she rasps out slowly, feeling wobbly and unsure. "Shinsou-"

"He's okay," Midnight interrupts. "Shouta and Hizashi took him to see Recovery Girl when he woke up. He's a bit bruised but okay and they've got him."

That's – "Good," she says.

"How are you feeling?"

She doesn't know. There's a stretch of emptiness through her, the aftermath of a bad dissociation and what she *should feel* struggles against *what isn't there* as she stares down at her teacher – a woman Katsuki had only interacted with a handful of times but whose bed and arms she'd woken up in.

Her fingers twitches and she gives her head a rough shake, like a dog trying to get rid of water.

"What do you usually do after an episode?" Midnight asks, apparently not in a hurry to move beneath her, body loose and relaxed but eyes never leaving her and Katsuki feels the burn of it as she lowers her gaze, watching the rise and fall of her chest.

"Kaa-san..." Katsuki swallows. "I need to call kaa-san."

"Then we'll do that," Midnight says and Katsuki nods but neither makes a motion to move and Katsuki's brows creases.

"Why – am I here?" she asks slowly.

"Your mother said you didn't like waking up alone."

That – is true, Katsuki thinks distantly. She'd been... afraid. Of waking up alone. Remembering the darkness of the world, the rain falling around her, choking and wheezing and *dying*.

Alone.

So very *alone*.

But-

Katsuki's fingers sinks into the fabric she's buried in – *softshewantstokeepit* – and something twists in her belly because-

She doesn't like being touched.

And.

I don't need-

The anger explodes through her like a roar, frothing through her veins

as she hunches forward, lips pulling back with a hiss through her teeth and her eyes dilate, narrowing upon her teacher as a tremble runs through her and she growls low and furious and *thisiswronghowdareyou-*

“Ah, there’s the Bakugou I was waiting for,” Midnight hums as she pushes up and Katsuki’s stomach swoops from beneath her as she jerks back and away, nearly sends herself off the bed if not for the hand that clamps around her briefly and it *burns* as she’s yanked up and then released.

Katsuki’s mind is *howling*. It rages, it snarls, it’s *drowning* because-

“Breathe,” Midnight’s voice worms through the spiral of *badbadbad* and Katsuki sucks in a breath automatically.

“Don’t-“ she rasps. “Don’t fucking tell me what to *do!*”

“I’m your teacher,” Midnight says and Katsuki stills, breathing harsh and hard as she narrows upon dark blue. “I am not here to hurt you,” she says firmly as Katsuki struggles against the onslaught of emotions, the sweet sting of her quirk as her palms grow slick with sweat. “You dissociated, badly, I might add. You weren’t in a right state of mind.”

“So- you took *advantage* of me!?” Katsuki spits out, feeling vulnerable, *hatinghatinghating* that someone other than his parents had seen him-

Her.

Katsuki digs her fingers into her hair, clenching down as tremors runs through her and everything is hard and *too much* and Shinsou-

Purple Guy-

Katsuki snarls – angry at herself, at Midnight, at Aizawa, at *fucking Shinsou* and she-

“Fuck-“ she chokes. “Fuck, fuck, fuck, *fuck!*”

“You need to calm down,” Midnight says with a rustle as she shifts. “No one is judging you here. You were in a bad spot, it happens and it’s nothing to be ashamed or embarrassed about.”

Katsuki jerks away from her touch when she reaches out, stumbling to her feet with a twist and nausea rolls over her so suddenly that she pushes through the door blindly but her knees hits the floor and she

throws up.

She chokes, gagging as her mind roars and her body presses up against the door frame as her stomach clenches down, cold sweat breaking out as it happens again and Katsuki-

“- you need to breathe, honey-“

Katsuki pants, open mouthed and confused and angry and-

“- in and out, just like we’ve taught you, remember?”

Katsuki shuts her eyes, sucks air in and holds it, breathing out when Mitsuki’s steady voice tells him to.

In.

And.

Out.

She doesn’t know how long they stay like that – Midnight crouched down, making no show of reacting to the sick on the floor, Katsuki’s phone in her hand and put on speaker to reach her without encroaching into her personal space.

“Bad day?” Mitsuki’s voices reaches her, gentler now even through the tinning sound of the speakers.

Katsuki huffs a miserable laugh because *her very existence feels like a fucking joke.*

“Words,” his mother reminds her.

“Yeah,” Katsuki rasps. *“s bad.”*

“I’m dealing with an emergency at the office but Masaru will be by to pick you up in an hour. Will you be alright staying with Midnight-sensei until then?”

Katsuki’s head raises just enough to meet the dark blue of her teacher’s, the violent roar soothed into something less reactive even as it creeps beneath her skin like a violent sort of promise.

Eyes without judgement meets hers, steady and there.

“Yeah,” Katsuki manages. *“s fine.”*

-

“You are the stubborn type, aren’t you?” Midnight muses as Katsuki sips the tea that had been shoved into her hand a bit reluctantly, some salty crackers placed beside it on a small plate.

The sick had been cleaned up and deposited off without comment while the water boiled and her teacher pads barefooted through the kitchen, moving between the fridge and the stove where something is boiling beneath a lid.

Katsuki hadn’t been paying much attention but her nose suspects oatmeal of some sort and there is an arrangement of fruit being prepared.

“You know, you remind me a bit of Shouta,” she says, apparently fine with keeping up a one-sided conversation. “He’s never been the vocal sort but his actions says a lot and he cares for his students. More than he’ll admit to.”

Katsuki’s shoulders draws up.

“And that includes you,” Midnight says as she slides two bowls with strawberries and blueberries respectively onto the table before drawing a chair out and settling down, ankles crossing beneath it. “Would you hear me out about something that’s been on my mind? You can say no if you want to but I’d like you to hear it and I think you *need* to hear it.”

Katsuki is used to people doing what they wanted no matter her thoughts on it. With doctors who pushed and prodded at her like an animal that needed to be restrained. Prescribing medications that left her listless and unresponsive until Masaru had flushed them down the toilet as Mitsuki held her warm and there against her chest as Katsuki’s mind fractured and the world ceased to make sense.

People don’t *ask*. She’s regarded with fear and suspicion and like a project with an easy *fix*.

The sheer *novelty* of it makes her tongue curl around the automatic *no*.

“... Fine,” she grits out.

Midnight regards her for a moment longer and then – “Thank you,” she says, smiling as she leant back. “I think we’ve done you a disservice,” she says bluntly as Katsuki gives a little jerk, eyes flaring

wide in her surprise as she looks up. “No, that’s wrong,” Midnight says with a little wrinkle of her nose. “I know we have and it’s not the kind of thing apologies are going to fix.”

Katsuki *stares*.

“What happened at the Sports Festival should never have been done to you and someone should have reached out to you sooner.” Her nails taps against the table, painted a pretty deep blue colour. “The moment you were accepted into U.A. you became our responsibility. You are a student, a teenager, and we should have done better.”

The thing is – that objectively, from Katsuki’s point of view, it’s *hilarious*. Because Midnight is *thirty-one*. In another world, another point of time, another twist of fate, they’d be two women in their thirties sitting across each other.

But instead she is and she isn’t and the eyes she looks out from belongs to a sixteen-year-old boy.

Two dead souls combining into something new and different, broken and angry, ravaged and *not right*.

Katsuki doesn’t trust these people. She doesn’t even *like* them. They’re her teachers and they had watched her chained and muzzled and had done *nothing*.

Her fists curls tight and white-knuckled around her cup.

I will become the Best!

A will and resonance of a dead boy who she’s desperate to make up to, the only thing that makes sense in the world she finds herself in.

Guilt – so much guilt for the boy that should have been and the parents who love him desperately even with her in a broken masquerade of their son.

She’s going to become a Hero.

And she doesn’t need *anyone* to make it happen.

-

Masaru presses a kiss to her brow after searching her face before drawing her into a hug and she knots up but allows it, breathing in the scent of him as he squeezes her tight before releasing her.

“Thank you for looking after my son,” he says to Midnight who is leaning against the wall, dressed in a long-sleeved turtle neck shirt and dark jeans.

“It was my pleasure,” she says with a curl of her red lips. “He’s my student, after all,” she says, *as if it means something*.

“I want to go home,” Katsuki interrupts when Masaru opens his mouth to respond and his father pauses and Katsuki avoids his eyes when he looks to her, her own somewhere at her booted feet with a scowl that falls naturally with a twist of her lips.

“Of course,” he says softly. “But first – what do we say?”

Katsuki twitches but looks up, meeting Midnight’s eyes and ignoring the little flash of amusement there. “Thank you,” she mutters.

“Of course, any time,” Midnight says with a sharp sort of smile and a meaningful look. “See you bright and early Monday morning, Bakugou-kun!”

-

Masaru doesn’t pry and Katsuki doesn’t offer any details.

Instead his father puts on a movie and brings out cookies and milk and they spend the afternoon on the couch with a shared blanket over their lap that Masaru gently tucks in place.

Katsuki isn’t really focusing on the movie and she knows that Masaru knows that but they’ve spent years together and he and Mitsuki knows better than anyone how she works after long episodes of disassociations and panic attacks.

Bad one? Mitsuki had asked and Katsuki had confirmed because it *means something* between the three of them.

So Katsuki pretends that the shoulder that presses against her own isn’t there for as much as her own sake as Masaru’s. Pretends that the cookies and milk isn’t as much for her comfort as it is for Masaru to feel useful.

-

Dabi isn’t answering her messages.

Toga isn’t either.

Katsuki stares at her phone, trying to ignore the ugly twist in her stomach as she clicks it off.

-

Katsuki spends her classes with headphones pulled up, pen moving a bit listlessly over the pages in a drawing of something that might, generously, be called a dog.

Shinsou is ignoring her and at lunch he doesn't make an appearance on the roof – something that makes Ashido pout even as she shoves meat and noodles into her mouth.

“Do you think something happened during the weekend?” she asks as Katsuki is contemplating how to best decimate the rice panda in her lunch box.

“He was attacked,” she informs the other a bit dispassionately as she cuts off one of the ears and pads it together with some omelette.

When she looks up at the stretch of silence she finds Ashido staring at her strangely.

“What?” Katsuki asks, shoving it into her mouth.

“It's just-“ But Ashido pauses. “Nevermind,” she says slowly. “But what do you mean he was attacked!?”

So Katsuki tells her shortly what had gone down, skipping over Shinsou's reaction to it because it was private and she's not an asshole. But a part of her really *wants to* because she doesn't *get it* and Ashido is good at understanding people while Katsuki finds them endlessly confusing and strange.

The blue ferret plush had been, very hesitantly and with many long looks, placed on a shelf in her room – a bit lost as what else to do with it.

If she hadn't been there she might have suspected it of spontaneously combusting.

“You think he'll be alright?” Ashido asks just as the door cracks open and they both turn towards it.

“I told you this is where they eat!” See Through's voice reaches them as the girl steps right past Round Cheeks who peers around before

following as Ashido immediately perked up, waving at them both.

“Hagakure! Uraraka!” she says as Katsuki sinks her chin into the fabric of Dabi’s scarf.

“Had a good weekend?” See Through asks as she drops down with a tray, Round Cheeks copying her with a raised brow at Katsuki who meets it with a glower.

“It was good,” Ashido says with a grin, open and relaxed even with the added company, and Katsuki notes the ease of which she tucked the worry away from her eyes and mouth. “I met up with some old classmates – it was alright you know? But it feels so *different*.”

“Oh I know what you mean,” See Through agrees with a little breath. “The Hero Course is just... so much more intense than normal school work.”

Katsuki thinks of her own experience in a normal college where students didn’t face down Villains or were encouraged to beat each other in festivals with audiences *encouraging it* and has a bizarre moment of complete and heartfelt empathy for whoever these old friends were.

People living completely normal lives in an abnormal world.

“What about you, Uraraka?” Ashido asks, golden eyes flicking to the hence quiet girl as she swirled together some noodles on her chopsticks.

Katsuki’s eyes are on See Through, bizarrely fascinated as a piece of meat simply *vanished into thin air*. Intellectually she knew it was just inside the girl’s mouth but it doesn’t make it any less strange.

“Mostly studying for the exams,” Round Cheeks admits a bit sheepishly. “Only three weeks left now.”

Ashido chokes and Katsuki thrusts her thermos at her when she keeps coughing and the girl pours it down almost desperately, eyes watering as she finally managed to get it down.

“What do you mean it’s in three weeks!?” Ashido demands, aghast and wide-eyed as she wipes spilled water from her mouth.

Katsuki, See Through and Round Cheeks all stares at her because Aizawa had been affirming it that very *morning* and Ashido flags

down, looking abjectly miserable and then panicked as she gave a little jerk and swivelled towards Katsuki who tensed as hands folded down on her shoulders, a face pressing close to her own.

“Bakugou – Katsuki, my friend, my pal I’m going to *fail*.”

“What?” she asks flatly, leaning back to put some space between them.

But Ashido hardly seems to notice and there’s some genuine panic there. “I’m going to fail and – no, no, what if they *throw me out!*?”

“I’m sure it wouldn’t come to that,” Round Cheeks says, hands waving through the air in front of her. “I’m sure Aizawa-sensei wouldn’t-“

“He failed his entire class the year before us,” Katsuki says flatly as the fingers on her shoulders clenches down almost painfully. “Stop that,” she says with a look up. “There’s still time and you’re not stupid so calm the fuck down.”

Ashido stills and Katsuki grimaces a bit as she slowly loosens her hold and leans back.

“Just have Bakugou tutor you,” See Through suggests as a piece of carrot disappeared with a crunch of invisible teeth. “He’s at the top of the class.”

“I have a life,” Katsuki says flatly even as Ashido turns wide hopeful eyes onto her.

“You’re already helping us too,” Round Cheeks says a bit thoughtfully the fucking *traitor*.

Katsuki feels a cold chill run down her back and the omelette slides from her chopsticks, dropping into the plastic container with a sad noise as Katsuki draws it close to her chest.

“Katsuki.” She hunkers down, just a bit. “What do they mean you’re already *helping them?*”

-

They’re at the cat café and Katsuki really just wants to go home and take a long nap but Ashido had ambushed her at the end of the day and hauled her along with See Through and Round Cheeks.

A cat nudges its head against her jaw and Katsuki runs her hand over

its orange head, fingers curling to scratch at its neck when it tilted into it with a low purr.

“This is such a cute place,” See Through says with delight, glove tugged off and a cat purring up a storm beneath her invisible fingers. “I’ve never been to a cat café before.”

Ashido had placed herself opposite Katsuki, leaving her with Round Cheeks on the small couch beside her – fingers gliding over the options on the menu, eyes flicking every now and then to the price with a hesitant sort of dip in her brow.

“Ashido is paying,” Katsuki hisses under her breath to her. “Get whatever the fuck you want.”

Round Cheeks gives a little startled jerk and then a strange look before it dipped into a hesitant smile.

Ashido gives her a look and Katsuki scowls right back.

“Right,” she says after a moment. “So – we need a schedule.”

“I can’t do Fridays,” See Through says immediately. “And I’m helping Mom with the restaurant during the weekends. What about you Bakugou?”

A paw lands demandingly on her chest when she momentarily stops her petting and she resumed it a bit grudgingly. “Whatever,” she grumbles. “But no more than two days a week. I have my own fucking life.”

“That’s fair,” See Through agrees readily enough. “We have Hero Course training on Mondays and Fridays so what about Tuesday and Thursdays?”

“Works for me,” Ashido says, perking up some.

Round Cheeks nods thoughtfully, four fingers pressing together. “But how are we going to do it?” she asks with a glance at Katsuki who pretends not to notice as another cat squirms its way up beside her and steps daringly into her lap. “If he’s helping all three of us.”

“Already thought of that!” See Through claps her hands together – at least by the sound of it. Her gloves are still beside her. “How about this – when Bakugou is helping Uraraka I can help you with your studying and vice versa? We don’t really need him all the time, just

for the sparring and you know, advice, I guess?”

Katsuki raises her head just enough to give her a dry look.

“What?” she asks. “I don’t know what you’ve got in mind but knowing you it means dusting your hands off us as soon as possible and we’re not *stupid*. We’ll figure it out once we’ve got the bases down.”

Ashido gives Katsuki an interested look. “What do you have in mind anyway?”

Katsuki growls but carefully pushes the cat on her lap aside to bend down and yank her backpack open, digging a bit before grasping for her notebook and fishing it up, nudging the second cat aside as she felt the paws of a third one on her back climb onto her shoulder and settle self-importantly there.

“Here,” she says, flicking the two side-by-side pages open and twisting it into a side-way slant for them both.

See Through and Round Cheeks had both answered the questions she'd emailed and Katsuki had spent her Sunday evening adjusting the notes she'd already made.

It's all very basic - what the two wanted was a boost in what to take into consideration for future fights, not an actual teacher, or Katsuki would have been tempted to go home and nap instead.

She still is. Tempted, that is. Just not overwhelmingly so.

Somehow Ashido's presence *helps* and she tries very hard not to think of *why*.

“Midnight has just started on nutrition and stuff but you both need to fucking eat better – you’re burning far more than you’re consuming with Hero training and whatever the fuck Aizawa surprises us with.” She pokes a bit aggressively at the list she’d made. “This builds muscles – what kind of muscles depends on what you combine it with.” She flicks her gaze up to See Through. “You want more wired ones, right? And stamina. A *lot* of stamina so you’re going to be running. And *you*–” She turns to Round Cheeks. “Your powers are a fucking *cheat*. I’m going to make you bench press *Deku* when I’m done with you. No quirk fucking *needed*.”

Ashido gives Round Cheeks an interested look. “That’s a hot thought,” she says and the brown haired girl flushes deep red with a wave of her

hands and a stuttered protest.

Katsuki wishes her all the luck with *that* because Ashido and See Throughs zeroes on her like interested sharks at the reaction.

“It’s all useless if you don’t know what to do with it,” Katsuki grumps as the waiter arrives to take their orders and she orders two cakes because she *can*.

“Make that a milkshake,” she growls over Round Cheeks order of water to go with it her own cake. “Largest one you got.”

She gives Ashido a challenging look but the pink haired girl remains silent, a bit contemplative as she flicks her gaze between the two before shrugging and making her own order.

Round Cheeks gaze itches at her skin and Katsuki ignores her.

“So, sparring?” See Through picks up as the woman bows with a smile before stepping away to prepare it.

-

The thing about the Hero course is that it doesn’t teach *style*.

The quirks are too diverse and the students come from all sorts of backgrounds so in many ways they’re expected to figure it out on their own with three years giving a liberate amount of time to establish their own style with help and advice when needed.

It’s reasonable – when not taking into the account the fact that there’s a group of Villains on the rise and All Might’s very existence had brought their focus upon them.

Katsuki finds it moronic in some ways – clever in others.

Downright cruel when taking into consideration those with backgrounds that leaves them leaps and bounds ahead before even starting.

There’s a reason that all of those that tops the Hero course nearly always have a background of families already in the Hero business. She’d combed through the records before getting admitted and while interning was supposed to help it wasn’t always a clear-cut thing.

Katsuki is at the top because she likes fighting, has the instincts for it, and she’d gone up against Dabi who is clever and watchful and likes

making a point of the way he goes after her when they go up against each other.

A weak left side? He'd burnt her so deep she'd blacked out before realising what had happened and she hadn't made the mistake of leaving it open again.

Her quirk is also explosive and flashy and it's favoured because it stands out.

"Keep your clothes on," she tells See Through bluntly where she stands opposite her and the girl pauses. "Or don't. I already know what you can do when you're invisible," she says with a flash of teeth. "And it won't much matter when you're going up against *me*."

"And what about you?" There's a meaningful sort of challenge in the way she phrases it.

"No quirk," Katsuki says with a roll of her neck. "Don't need it to beat you."

Ashido lets out a quiet *oooh* from the side-lines before yelping as Round Cheeks poked at her for not paying attention and dutifully focusing back on the books spread out around them.

She isn't surprised when See Through choses to shimmy out of her clothes anyway because it's *familiar*, it's the way she's been taught to fight, and Katsuki is going to make a point of it.

Because it'll only take her so far and the world is a violent place.

So she remains still, listening carefully, and then she twists and lashes out when the girl tries to take her by surprise – hand sliding momentarily over a bare shoulder before locking down on her upper arm as she takes a sliding step backwards and hauls her up and over her shoulder in a hard roll that slams her back-first against the ground with a sharp breath and a bitten-back cry.

Katsuki's eyes follows the small pitter-patter of blood when it becomes visible as she scrambles up.

"You don't need a quirk to win," she informs the other, flexing her fingers. "You just got to be *smarter*."

Katsuki pauses when a finger presses up against her chest, breath ghosting warm against her lips as See Through leant close. "Show me

how to do that,” she demands, blood rolling down an invisible back where it had scraped roughly open.

Chapter End Notes

We are nearing the exams! I'm thinking next chapter or the one after it, I haven't quite decided yet but we'll get there.

We'll also get a more vocal Uraraka once she figures out how to interact with our stand-offish protagonist. She's Midoriya's friend and there's certainly some factors to take into consideration from that.

I'm just generally looking forward to the summer camp arc as well and I suspect you guys are too so I'm pretty pleased to get this up and us one step closer.

I'm artsy-death on tumblr if you're about there and this has been chapter 10 of In The End.

I hope you enjoyed!

Conversations

Chapter Notes

Purple Guy = Shinsou

Sparky = Kaminari

Punk = Jirou

Shitty Hair = Kirishima

Class Rep = Iida

Deku = Midoriya

《Hey》 = sign-language

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

PURPLE GUY: we need to talk

Katsuki stares down at the message, sand beneath her, the sea lapping against her ankles.

There's an hour yet until school but-

Katsuki texts him an address before sliding it back into her shorts, tugging her shirt over her head and grimacing a bit as it melded against her wet skin. Brushes the sand away from her boxes as best as she can before she draws her running shorts up over them and making her way back to his parents' house.

"I'm skipping first lesson," she informs Mitsuki after showering and dressing, snagging an apple from the fruit bowl.

"Want me to drop you off somewhere?" the woman asks, half-way into her jacket and raising a brow.

Katsuki tips her head, considering.

"Sure," she agrees, reaching for her boots and pulling them on.

-

"Just the first lesson – I'm calling school to let them know you'll be late," Mitsuki informs her mildly. "Make sure to grab something to eat, honey."

Katsuki will never start to make sense of his parents but she's thankful

all the same, she supposes, muttering a *thank you* before shoving the door shut behind her and peering both ways before crossing the street to the small café, hands in her pocket and slouching down as she weaves through the thick throng of people.

The bell rings above her as she steps inside and the waitress is a familiar one who smiles before waving her along for the corner table.

She orders two of their breakfast trays, something sweet and syrupy that makes her grimace slightly as she quite preferred something steady in the morning.

“We can make the pancakes whole wheat if you want,” the waitress offers, catching her look. “I believe we have some carrots as well. I could probably make something out of it.”

Katsuki agrees and the waitress tips her head before leaving as one the cats climbs her lap and nudges on her until she feeds it one of the treats from the middle of the table.

It's pretty empty in the morning and Katsuki doesn't reach for her headphones, content with the low murmur from a couple quite a bit away from her and the soft purrs of the cats as more joins her before Shinsou actually makes an appearance.

He pauses, watching her from the doorway, and she raises an eyebrow in response – a cat on her shoulder, two more in her lap, another beside her and three on the table with lazy content flicks of their tails as they bask in the sunlight creeping through the window.

“I didn't know you liked cats,” he says, voice low and something she can't quite read in his dark lidded eyes.

She shrugs.

“I ordered breakfast,” she says and his shoulders tenses momentarily at the sound of her voice before he slides in, settling down across her.

“Not afraid I'm going to *brainwash* you?” he asks and there's something there – in the depth of his voice, written in the way his muscles draws tight even as one of the cats on the table rolls lazily up on its paws and threads its way over to him to drop into his lap, curling belly up to offer it up for petting as it stretches out.

“We're in a public café,” Katsuki drawls in response, teeth flashing momentarily.

The waitress appears, sliding a tray each in front of them. “Anything else?” There’s a tall glass of orange juice accompanying their food and they both declines it. “Just wave if you need me,” she says before drawing away to the counter.

Shinsou sits hunched over and staring darkly down at the stack of pancakes and the melting piece of butter on top.

“I didn’t have friends before U.A.” Katsuki blinks at him, fork half-way through the stack of pancakes and she tilts her head just a fraction as she presses down with a clink against the porcelain as it goes through. “I’m not even sure we *are* friends,” he says with a bitter laugh. “I didn’t want you to help, you know?” He looks at her, purple eyes tired and heavy. “I don’t get you.” His voice comes out short, rough.

Katsuki stuffs the pancakes into her mouth, saying nothing.

“People hate my quirk,” Shinsou continues when she doesn’t answer, as if spurred by it. “Brainwashing is a *Villains quirk*, you know? Robs people of their will and want to do my bidding. Even at the Sports Festival everyone-“ His mouth twists. “It was supposed to be different in the Hero Course but you won’t even speak to me unless you’ve taken *precaution*.”

He isn’t wrong. She’d chosen the café because the workers there were moderately familiar with her thanks to her frequents stops there with Ashido and sure to notice if something strange happened.

“I hate it,” he tells her. “Those guys in the alley – they’re co-workers with my foster dad. He-“ And here he swallows roughly. “He told them about me. About my *quirk*. They were going to – they told me that if they just *silenced me* then I wouldn’t be able to give any command.” His mouth stretches, an ugly thing filled with anger and hurt. “And then you stepped in and you wouldn’t even speak to me.”

“What did you want me to say?” Katsuki asks mildly curious.

He gives her a long tired look. “Anything,” he confesses and it looks like it hurts him to say it. “You’re- I don’t know what we are. I thought – maybe friends. It’s stupid. I know it is. And yet – you’re here. And you saved me from- that. And I’m just-“ He slumps back. “I’m staying with Aizawa-sensei now. He wouldn’t let me go back there. To my foster parents.”

Katsuki had wondered, a bit distantly, but she’d been busy with her own aftermath of the disassociation which had clawed angrily at her

after waking up in her teachers' bed.

"Is my quirk really that wrong?" Shinsou asks and he looks vulnerable, she thinks, and he's made a bad choice in conversation partner if he's looking for reassurances because-

"I don't trust your quirk," she says bluntly and he flinches before hiding it with a curl of his shoulders. "I don't trust *people*." She leans back, hand rising to scratch at the jaw of the cat on her shoulder. "Heroes, Villains, the world is fucking corrupt and ugly and I don't do *trust*. Anyone is capable of turning on you. Ashido could be planning on stabbing a knife into my back and I wouldn't know because she's so fucking *genuine* and I don't get that. I don't *trust it*."

Shinsou stares at her and Katsuki shrugs.

"I could blow up this entire café and they wouldn't have time to blink," she says with a twist of her mouth, smoothing her hand idly over the fur of the cat. "All Might can break bones with a single flick of his fingers, Endeavour can start a forest fire with just a gesture, Midnight could put our entire class to sleep and murder us one by one and we wouldn't have time to do much more than blink. Ashido could melt your face off, Sparky could fry you and leave you in a coma with just a press of his finger, Round Cheeks could send you floating into the fucking *sun* and there's nothing you or I can do about it."

Katsuki taps her finger against the nose of the cat before drawing her hand down and spreading both out.

"You want to tell your quirk isn't dangerous? Get off your high-horse. We're *all* dangerous. Yours is fucking *tricky* and I like it as much as I like Duct Tape's or fucking *Froggy's*. It's my mind and my body I'm not about to risk *anything* just to put your mind at fucking ease. You accept that or you don't, I don't *care*."

"You've really put some thought into that," Shinsou says after a long moment, a tremble in his hand as he runs it over his face before it frames his mouth, leaving only his eyes visible. "Anyone ever tell you you're a bit messed up?"

Katsuki twitches. "Fuck off," she mutters, shoving pancakes into her mouth.

"I mean it," Shinsou says, voice slightly muffled against his palm. "You're *paranoid*. You're not – *normal people* don't think about Heroes like that." There's something like a revelation in his eyes and for some

reason he's fucking *smiling* when he lowers his hand – a bit off, crooked, as if he wasn't used to it. "What about Aizawa-sensei?" he urges, leaning forward. "His quirk just cancels others."

"He wears his *capture weapon* like a fucking *scarf*," Katsuki growls and Shinsou throws his head back and *laughs*.

-

"*You*-" Katsuki snarls at Ashido as she side-steps Class Rep and whatever mantra he had waiting for her, leaving him to snag the still grinning boy behind her, the hair at the back of her neck rising as he kept his eyes on her. "Make him stop fucking *smiling*."

Ashido, Sparky, Shitty Hair and Punk all stares at her and she twitches.

"I take it your talk went well," Ashido says, looking entirely too entertained.

Her eyes flicks seconds before a hand lands on her shoulder and Katsuki goes rigid as Shinsou leans forward, far too close, her skin burning.

"Morning," he drawls as Katsuki's fingers curls. "And it did. We're proper *friends* again, aren't we *Bakugou*?"

Katsuki jerks out of his grip, growling as she took two hasty steps back only to hit someone else and twitching away from Deku who threw his hands up.

"S-sorry, Kacchan. Are you- are you okay?" He looks at her, all big green eyes, and somewhere deep a small voice hisses *thatfuckingDeku*-before she shoves roughly at it.

"I'm fucking *fine*," she snaps and then growls because he *flinches* and she hisses a breath through her teeth. "Where is Present Mic?" she demands.

He blinks owlishly at her. "He's – at his office, I think?"

"*Show me*."

"Bakugou-kun," Class Rep says disapprovingly. "You need to treat your classmates with-"

"Would you, for once, mind your own *fucking business*?" Katsuki hisses

as she swivels around with a snarl at the tall blue haired boy. “Deku,” she snaps and he straightens up before sidling past Class Rep with an apologetic little look before slipping out of the classroom with Katsuki at his heel.

Behind them there’s a ruckus of voices and her muscles coils tight before she forces her shoulders down and slouches, hands disappearing into her pockets.

“W-what do you want with Present Mic-sensei?” Deku asks a bit hesitantly and it strikes her that this is the first time they’re on their own since she’d beat him half to death during their first lesson with All Might.

“Talk,” she says shortly.

“Oh.” He fiddles a bit and Katsuki slants him a look.

“If there’s something you want to say just say it,” she snaps, irate.

He jerks a bit guiltily before he swallows and straightens up, just a bit, shorter than her, still, and there’s a part of her that is young and dead and yet *gloats*.

“I’m – I’m sorry.” She stops dead in the hallway, turning around to find him still, bowed to the waist. “I should have – if it wasn’t for me-“ And fuck her, this *day*. “I know you don’t want to hear it!” he blurts out as he looks up at her, slowly straightening, determination in his eyes. “You’re – you’re my *friend* Kacchan and I’m *sorry*.”

Katsuki wonders, despairingly, what she’d done to deserve any of this.

“Would you just fucking *stop*,” she says tiredly, craving a smoke and a long nap away from *children*. “You – *we* – were *kids*.”

Katsuki is many things but she’s not about to lay blame at the feet of an eight-year-old boy for her existence. She’s not irrational or angry enough for such a thing and the dead boy had been as much to blame for the entire thing, perhaps even more, if the needle sharp memory of stepping back and away from a green haired boy with sudden vertigo just to avoid touching him only to find nothing behind himself, had anything to say about it.

And the boy is dead anyway and so is the woman who tastes rain and sound in her death as she chokes and gasps and *drowns*.

The boy's death had been an accident, the woman's a murder. Her very existence goes against all rational and sanity and she's quite sure she'd be institutionalized if she was to as much breathe a word of it.

"You almost died," he says and there's old wounds in his eyes.

Katsuki wants to *laugh*.

The thing is – Katsuki remembers him. It's like shaking dust off old tangled memories every time she sees him. Recalling a boy that follows and smiles, lips going wobbly as explosions goes off and words meant to hurt dig deep into shoulders that hunch and shrink but with eyes that never stop hoping for a friendship that had been.

Katsuki isn't the boy. She isn't the woman either but she *remembers*.

A friendship before quirks, hands clasped during sleepovers and a shared joy in the Hero they looked up to. Birthdays and scrambles up slides that had seemed impossibly high and fearsome as a small blond haired boy reached for a green haired one with shared trust between the best of friends.

The dead boy had turned cruel with the first taste of his quirk. Self-important and a sense of a rightness when *Deku* never gained his.

"You can't save everyone," she says, taking a step towards him, eyes narrowed. "Everywhere there are people dying. Gasping and choking, Heroes unable to reach them, those with little in life succumbing to the cold in harsh winters, children cowering between the fists of their should-be protectors. People *suffer*, it's how it fucking *works*."

Katsuki remembers a hand reaching out, wide and fearful as the world tilted and the boy *fell* and-

"I could have saved *you*," he nearly whispers.

The rage that bursts through her is violent and her hand snaps out, curling into his shirt as she yanks him towards her, towering over his smaller form as she bares her teeth, malice in her eyes and tasting a sickening sort of enjoyment in the way his form shrinks as she presses her mouth in a warm breath against his ear.

"*No one*," she says slowly, allowing the words to curl on her tongue. "Could have saved me. Least of all a useless fucking nerd like *you*."

She shoves him away from her and he stumbles, staring up at her with

wide-eyes in the empty corridor as she bares her teeth.

“We’re not *friends*. You and I are *nothing*,” she tells him with a glower. “Spare your heroics for someone who *cares*.”

She turns her heel, leaving him behind as he wraps his arms around himself.

-

Katsuki is glaring at nothing when Present Mic finds her, computer beneath his arm and bag beneath the other.

“Got lost, little listener?” he asks, visibly amused.

Katsuki turns her glower upon him but his smile only grows. “Come on, we can talk while we walk, *yeah?*”

-

Present Mic is Katsuki’s new favourite teacher.

Cheek resting against the palm of her hand, a pair of brand new headphones over her ears, her noise cancelling ones dangling around her neck, she watches in rapt fascination as the Voice Hero talks about the differences between ASL and JSL, making a show of the different ones on the small computer screen.

“- unlike the American Sign Language, JSL relies far more on lip movement to accompany the motion of the signs so make sure you pay attention to my lips, Bakugou-kun. For example, if you compare-”

This wasn’t a spur of the movement thing, weren’t notes scrambled together, but a lesson tailored and recorded entirely for *her*.

She flicks her gaze up to look at the blonde haired man, hair gelled up and wearing his leathery Hero get-up, glasses in place to hide the peculiar shade of his eyes and the constrictive circles around his pupils.

There’s enthusiasm for his work as he speaks, English falling as naturally from his lips as his Japanese.

She looks down again, clicking to rewind the last ten seconds and focusing back on the screen.

-

Katsuki's last two weeks before the written exam is busy between training and studying and she's barely spared the time to think between it all as the teachers bear down on them and panic spreads among her classmates.

Some handle it better than others but Katsuki finds herself with Ashido asleep on her bed after a long study lesson, the stress finally melting away from her face as she crashed the day before the exam.

Katsuki contemplates waking her but ultimately straightens out and ambles out of her room, drawing the door gently shut behind her.

"Kaa-san?" She peers into the living room where both his parents are curled up, watching the television. "Do you have the number to Ashido's mom?"

"I do," Mitsuki agrees as Masaru reaches for the remote, turning the sound down. "Why?"

"Ashido fell asleep," Katsuki admits, scratching at the back of her neck and giving a rough shrug. "Can you tell her mom she's staying over? I don't want to wake her."

Mitsuki's face softens. "Of course, honey."

"I'll bring out the spare futon," Masaru says with a little smile and Katsuki grunts before threading her way back.

Ashido is still sleeping soundly and Katsuki is mindful to keep quiet as she gathers the notes and books up, settling it on her desk as she dragged a hand through her hair, contemplating but finally stepping forward.

It takes some awkward wiggling but Katsuki gets her arm down and around her friend's back and the other beneath her knees, lifting her up with a little grunt, ears tipping red as Ashido turned her head to press closer with a low murmur of her name.

She nudges the cover back with her knee and drops Ashido's head down on her pillow, tugging her socks off before drawing the covers up and over her.

Masaru appears with the futon and together they spread it out on the floor beside the bed before stepping out of the dark room.

"Do you want to borrow one of my shirts to sleep in?" he asks.

"Yeah," she agrees, relieved she wouldn't have to fumble in the dark for one.

"Her mother was pretty relieved to hear she fell asleep," Mitsuki says as she slides back into the apartment, having stepped outside to make the call. "She was surprised and happy to hear you've been helping her studying."

"She *asked*," Katsuki grumbles quietly with a glance towards her bedroom door.

It was meant to be a two-day thing in combination with the time spent with See Through and Round Cheeks but Ashido had been coming home with her nearly every day for the past two weeks and while Katsuki feels the strain of having someone in her space she hadn't been able to deny the other.

"I'm proud of you, brat," Mitsuki laughs softly. "Go to bed."

-

She dreams of an apple orchard, straw coloured grass beneath her bare back and exhaustion in her limbs as she stretches out, her fingers brushing his.

The sun is warm above them and his lips tastes of the fruit they've spent hours picking when he rolls over and straddles her hips to press them against hers.

"*I want to stay like this forever,*" he breathes, mouth moving clearly for her to read as he draws back, his eyes impossibly soft as she reaches her hand up, pressing it against his cheek as he tilts into her touch.

«*I don't know,*» she signs as she draws her hand back. «*I don't think the whole apple orchard thing is for me.*»

«*You're right.*» His eyes crinkles with a hint of mischievousness.
«*We're just going to have to switch if up. There are entire orchards of oranges and pears just ripe for our picking.*»

«*But not peaches,*» she says and he laughs, a breathy little quiver of his belly that never failed to warm her heart.

«*No peaches,*» he agrees. «*Maybe if we're lucky we'll be spirited away by aliens.*»

《Lucky?》

《*I hear aliens are up to some funky stuff.*》 He wiggles his brows and she snorts, looping her arms around him and drawing him down against her chest.

It's a bit awkward – they're both sweaty and dirty and his bare chest presses sticky against her shirt but she doesn't care.

《*I'm sure we could get up to plenty of funky stuff on our own, no aliens needed,*》 she signs as he tilts his head up after she gives him a nudge and she feels the shiver that goes through him as he shifts.

《*Yeah?*》 he asks, his breath warm against her neck as he pressed forward to nose against it.

“Mm.”

《*I kinda want to fuck you right here and now,*》 he admits before a hand ghosts down to brush teasing fingers against her belly where her shirt and ridden up and she shifts her hips encouragingly, groaning warmly as his hand dips obligingly beneath the fabric of her shorts to press up against her underwear with a little curl.

《*So blunt,*》 she signs before he bends down to catch her lips, tongues moving languish, content beneath the warmth and the sun.

“*I love you,*” he says, the shape of the words familiar on his lips.

“*And I love you,*” she assures him, words carefully practiced with a friend to make sure she spoke them right, breathing hitching as his fingers grounded down. 《*I don't think our Boss would much appreciate the voyeuristic show, however.*》

His fingers pauses and then draws back as he slumps against her.

《*Tease,*》 he complains with a twist of his fingers, and she laughs.

Chapter End Notes

Aaand we've reached the exams! I hope you guys finds it just as exciting as I do because it is about to become a shit show of epic proportions.

Shinsou is a bit of a mess but Katsuki is a bigger mess and Shinsou is both relieved and concerned because *really*.

I hope this chapter cleared up some things. I think we're pretty solid? Feel free to shoot me a word if there's anything that feels confusing or just - anything, really. I'm chatty.

You're all as wonderful as ever and I'm half-asleep and tired from a long shift at work so I'm gonna curl up in an exhausted heap and sleep for some eight hours.

I'm artsy-death on tumblr and this has been chapter 11 of In The End.

I hope you enjoyed!

EDIT: I FORGOT TO ADJUST THE SIGNING AT THE END I AM VERY SORRY BUT I FIXED.

Exams

Chapter Notes

See Through = Hagakure

Sparky = Kaminari

Shitty Hair = Kirishima

Duct Tape = Sero

Feather Head = Tokoyami /Dark Shadow = Dark Shadow

Class Rep = Iida

《Hey》 = sign-language

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

“Just borrow one of mine,” Katsuki grunts to Ashido as she went from surprised and delighted to waking up with in her bed, craning to look down at her sprawled out on her futon, to panic at the fact that they had to be in school in an hour and she didn’t have her uniform. “s just a written test today.”

Ashido pauses. “You know what kind of rumours that’s going to bring, right?” she asks as Katsuki threads her way over to her dresser and pulling the top one open, rummaging about.

“I’m not completely socially backwards,” Katsuki huffs as she throws one of her spare uniform over with a *flump* on the bed. “Not that I *care*.”

Ashido widens her eyes dramatically. “Maybe this was your plan all along? A notch in the belt with the pretty *Ashido Mina*. Sure to boost the sad, volatile, anti-social reputation of one Bakugou Katsuki.”

“You’re not my type,” Katsuki informs her flatly, unimpressed.

Ashido clutches her heart. “I felt that right here.” She swoons back dramatically, sprawling a bit haphazardly in her wrinkled clothes from the day before. “Go on without me, I have suffered the sharp wound of rejection!”

“I’m sure to tell Aizawa just that when you turn up *late* for the finals,” Katsuki grumps, taking some satisfaction in the way Ashido gives a little yelp before scrabbling up, practically diving for the door.

The uniform doesn't look half-bad on her, Katsuki decides some fifteen minutes later as Ashido practically pools into the chair beside her, hair wet and sticking up a bit messily from a rough towel drying.

Ashido is shorter than her and she'd rolled up the sleeves, letting the ends of the pants pool at her heel. But she's muscular and her shoulders straight and proud and while the jacket sits a bit oddly over her chest it's a decent fit.

Katsuki drags the plate from the middle of the table and pushes it in front of the other.

"Kaa-san said she's driving us," Katsuki informs her as Ashido brightens up, reaching for both fork and knife as Katsuki spears an egg in two with her fork on her own plate. "Tou-san made you a bento," she tags on idly as she shoves it into her mouth.

Ashido turns to her, cheeks bulging and eyes shining.

-

Ashido isn't wrong.

Katsuki's shoulder bumps against her friend's, uncomfortable and scowling as more than one sharp voice rose up around them.

She understands, suddenly, why Ashido had poked her into dragging her headphones on before entering the classroom because it's fucking *loud* even with them on.

Beside her Ashido grins, hand on her hip and not looking remotely affected by it as See Through latches on and practically drags her towards the gathering group of girls.

Katsuki's eyes linger for a moment longer before turning around and pausing – because there is Sparky, just a tad too close for comfort, Shitty Hair a bit wide-eyed behind him, Duct Tape staring at her with large round disbelieving eyes but a slowly spreading smile that made her lips pull back in response.

"Bakugou," Sparky's mouth moves. "I didn't know you had it in you, man."

Katsuki considers annoyance.

Considering anger.

But instead something else slots into place and she raises her hand and pushes her headphones down.

“Oh you misunderstand, Sparky,” she says with a sharp sort of smile as she leans forward, making sure to hold his gaze. “You’re more of my *type*.”

Sparky makes a noise like a *wheeze*.

“Thank you?” he chokes out, *flushing* of all things, and Katsuki straightens out with some satisfaction.

“We clear?” she checks, darting her gaze between the group of boys, and they nod a bit hastily.

The woman is straight. She thinks that the boy, if given a chance, might have been gay. Katsuki doesn’t dwell, what is – *is*. But she knows that it’s like to be a young girl and just a notch in the post and she wants no part in it.

A dull thump announces the arrival of their wayward sensei and Katsuki brushes her shoulder deliberately against Sparky’s as she passes him by, enjoying the way he jerked with a little flush to his cheeks, wide-eyed as he took a hasty step back.

Katsuki could never consider them anything but children and she’s not *depraved* but it’s amusing all the same and she snorts as she throws herself into her seat, letting her backpack thud against the ground as Aizawa slouched forward, letting a stack of paper land on top of the podium.

The tension that follows could practically be cut with a knife.

-

The day is just a long row of one exam after the other and Katsuki has a headache at the end of it, rubbing at her neck as she stepped out of the classroom.

It’d been easy enough but it was always tedious to formulate in the way that fit into the peculiars of the worded answers they wanted. But Katsuki had been good at school in one life and it had followed her into another.

Ashido’s arms slides around her neck, her weight following to a slight grunt.

“Katsukiiii, I’m *tired*.”

“What of it?” she mutters back as the arms around her neck flexed almost contemplatively before a boot came up to press against her hip bone and Katsuki’s eyes widens, tensing as it pressed down and the pink haired girl hoisted herself up, swinging legs around her waist as Katsuki’s hand snapped down to grasp at her thigh.

She stands a bit stiffly in place as Ashido wiggles in place properly before slumping down against her with a sigh of content, practically boneless.

“Hey, Ashido, Bakugou!” Punk raises a hand in a wave to them both. “We’re heading to grab some ice cream – you want in?”

“*Ice cream*,” Ashido practically moans and Katsuki breathes a sigh through her teeth before taking a step towards Punk who gives them both an appraising look and then a smile that made Katsuki eye her warily.

“Come on,” she says with a little jerk of her head.

-

We, turns out to be most of the class.

Ashido isn’t the only one who looks dead on their feet and Katsuki catches Sparky’s eyes flitter between Ashido and Shitty Hair before he leans in with large eyes to a laugh as the red haired boy crouched down obligingly to hoist him up.

Sparky shoots Ashido a smug look and she feels the pink haired girl’s arms tighten in response before blowing him a raspberry.

“Hey, Uraraka!” See Through calls. “Is Midoriya joining us?”

Out of the twenty students he’s the only one not there and Katsuki tilts her head slightly to acknowledge Shinsou as he sidles up beside them while Ashido greets him with a bright exclamation of his name.

“Ah-no.” Round Cheeks rubs at the back of her head. “All Might picked him up after class,” she admits.

“They’re close,” a quiet voice observes beside Katsuki who slants a look to the dark feathery head beside her, blinking as a ball of shadow and yellow eyes peered back at her from the inside of a collar.

She hasn't interacted much with Feather Head but it's hard to forget someone with a beak for mouth and she raises a brow at the watchful eyes of Dark Shadow.

"I guess?" Round Cheeks says with a tilt of her head. "They have lunch together sometimes. All Might makes them *bentos*."

"Speaking of bentos," Ashido's arms tightens, her cheek worming up to press against Katsuki's. "Your dad makes the best ones," she sighs a bit dreamily. "I have no idea how he knew all my favourites but it was absolutely heaven."

"He *asked*," Katsuki admits a bit absently. "And he *does*."

"*Softie*," Ashido coos into her ear and Katsuki turns her head with a snap of her teeth in front of her nose to a laugh. "It's alright! Your secret is safe with me! Knowing all my favourite foods, it's sweet really," she hums.

"Ready to head out?" Shitty Hair's eyes sweeps across them all, Sparky resting contently with his chin on his shoulder and an excited grin, Class Rep a step behind them, arms folded and eyes glinting. "Celebratory ice cream it is!" He pumps his fist up, flashing rows of sharp teeth to cheers that rise loud around them a second after Ashido's hands slides over her ears, elbows resting on her shoulders to allow the movement.

Katsuki feels the press of her breasts against her back, the warmth of her breath against her neck, something strange twisting up inside of her as she lowered her head and took a step forwards.

-

Katsuki licks the last of the ice cream from her hand, pausing as her mind flashed to another tongue entirely and jerking it down with a scowl before reaching over and snagging a napkin from Class Rep, who had brought a neat little pile of them along from the ice cream cart.

"- wonder what they have in store for us tomorrow-"

"- I heard about robots-"

"- do you really think -"

"- English was so hard-"

“- hey, hey, what did you answer on –“

Katsuki reaches for her headphones, dragging them up and over her ears before leaning back on her arms and tilting her head up, letting the wind rustle her hair as she breathed in, out.

She flicks one eye open as Ashido leans to rest against her shoulder but doesn't comment, content to just be.

-

“I can't believe he allows you to do that,” Yaomomo whispers, hand rising to cover her mouth as Ashido leant her head against the shoulder of their resident hot-head who seemed to content to ignore the rest of them.

It's a bit odd to see his face relaxed instead of scrunched up, a small dip of his mouth as his chest rose and fell slowly, jacket shrugged off and tied around his waist to leave him in the white short-sleeved button-up of the summer uniform. Headphones up and over his ears, eyes closed.

The girls had mostly gathered together, with the exception of Uraraka who was busy challenging Shouji to an arm wrestling to a gathering of bets being placed.

“*Rabbit*. He likes you, so much is clear,” Asui says bluntly, finger pressing to her lip with a contemplative little tip of her head.

"Did you see how protective he got?" Jirou snorts. "Practically a love confession from grouchy there."

They quiet, all of them recalling the way he'd outed himself as gay without hesitation to avoid any rumours between him and Ashido.

“He... told me when we got stuck under the rubble,” Hagakure confesses in a low voice. “He figured out that I wasn't wearing a suit when he had to carry me. And when we ended up in a compromising situation he just – told me. Mind you, he had a concussion, but still.”

“He is... surprisingly considerate in some ways,” Jirou says with a huff. “But you've seen the way he went after Midoriya.” She gives a low whistle. “Messy shit.”

“They obviously have some sort of history,” Hagakure says, gloved hands pressing together. “I mean, Midoriya calls him *Kacchan* and

Bakugou... Alright, to be fair, I think he knows like two of the names in our class.”

Yaomomo turns inquiringly to her.

“He uses nicknames,” Ashido says a bit absently. “He used to call me Raccoon Eyes. You’re Ponytail, Punk-“ she says with a nod to them. “See Through and Froggy, I believe. But you know! He’s a real softie behind all that anger and-“ *hurt*, lingers on her tongue before she swallows it because it’s *personal*. “I woke up on his bed this morning while he slept on a futon on the floor, *and* he cooked me breakfast,” Ashido admits a bit smugly instead.

Yaomomo makes a soft noise that draws more than one look and she flushes a bit. “It’s sweet,” she says a tad defensively.

“Is he always so grumpy?” Jirou asks, ear jack curling and eyes sharp.

“Oh, I’ve wondered about that too!” Hagakure exclaims, leaning forward. “Like, does he smile *at all*?”

“Not... yet.” Ashido’s mouth curls a bit hesitantly as she glances towards her friend, a bit troubled as her eyes snagged on the small scar at the corner of his mouth.

Ashido wonders how hard the metal of the metal muzzle had bitten down on the Sports Festival to leave lasting marks on either side of his face, soft lines that had healed from pink to white.

His eyes flicks open – a vivid crimson red that dips to hers, brow rising in silent question.

《*Just thinking*》 she signs a bit clumsily after scrambling for the correct ones from youtube videos watched late at night and during morning train rides.

He shifts and she dips slightly back when he puts his weight on his left hand, the right moving her hand to just above her brow. “Brain,” he tells her and then shifts it to her temple and taps her index finger there. “Thinking.”

His voice is always lower when he wears his headphones, almost rumbling through his chest, and she flashes him a quick smile before running through it again to a small grunt.

He flattens out her left palm and then drags his index finger over it

and Ashido recognises it for *what* and mentally translates it into *about what?*

She pokes him in the chest for *you* and he makes a low *hmm* but doesn't pursue it further as he slouches back again.

She's honestly surprised he'd even agreed to come along in the first place and with the ruckus rising as Shinou settled down in front of Uraraka she isn't surprised to see his headphones remaining on.

He got downright *twitchy* at loud noises and she'd seen him flinch and rub at his ears on more than one occasion.

An invisible hand squeezes down on her wrist and Ashido breathes out.

Being friends with Bakugou Katsuki is a strange experience. At first she finds amusement in the way he snaps and snarls and hisses, constantly on his guard, two steps off from the rest of the class and lost on his own world with the headphones pulled down over his ears.

But the more she gets to know him, the more she *cares*, the less can she ignore the sheer oddities of him. Like the violent reactions to touch, the way he knots up tight with eyes that burn and glowers, the way he just *shut down* in the corridor as the other class taunted him about being muzzled and silenced.

Ashido had thought it *funny*. For maybe two seconds. But the emotion had been there when she first caught sight of him being dragged out.

They're Heroes, she'd reassured herself. *No one is getting hurt-*

And then she had seen him on the large screens, an icy shiver crawling down her spine as laughter and mockery rose around her and suddenly it wasn't very funny at all as All Might snapped the muzzle in place to quiet him.

The ill-ease had only grown when she couldn't find him afterwards.

She presses just a bit closer to Katsuki, wiggling up against his chest to feel the rise and fall of it behind her as he let out a small huff but didn't protest it and she doesn't take it for granted, the way he allows her close, a warm proud glow in her chest.

"I wonder what Aizawa-sensei has planned for tomorrow," Jirou muses out loud with a flicker of a look towards Ashido, a raised brow

and the question clear: *you OK?*

“I’m hoping robots,” Ashido pipes up with a flash of a smile at her, tucking her thoughts carefully away. “But knowing Aizawa-sensei...” she trails off, pouting. “It’s going to be hell, isn’t it?”

“He delights in chaos,” Asui says a bit solemnly and Jirou snorts with laughter.

-

Katsuki stares numbly at the mouth of Aizawa, watching the way his lips move but unable to filter it into sensible noise and words.

All Might’s gaze burns, eyes bright and shining where he looks down at them, and Katsuki bumps up against Ashido’s chest when she turns around before snapping back, aware of the way she’s coiled so tense her teeth grits together.

“I’m going to fucking *win*,” Katsuki rasps as she stares into the golden eyes of her friends and Ashido’s mouth snaps shut.

Katsuki hadn’t even been aware of her talking.

“I know you will,” Ashido’s voice reaches her like through a thick fog and Katsuki’s chest expands and draws together with breaths that are too loud but slow, so slow, timed, perfect.

Counting, counting, counting.

Katsuki stares blankly at her and then she scoffs and jerks aside and steps towards the bus Deku and All Might are already waiting at as adrenaline worms its way through her body, heart thumping, mania creeping through her as her smile stretches fiendish and wide.

-

What’s in a Hero?

Katsuki doesn’t know but All Might is supposed to be the best of the best, the Number One Hero, the *Symbol of Peace*.

Katsuki has nightmares about him.

She flexes her hands, urging her sweat glands to work faster and harder as the scent of her quirk turns almost sickeningly sweet in the air around her.

“- think of us as actual Villains.”

Blue eyes, those fucking *blue* eyes.

She’s going to burn them right out of his *fucking* skull.

-

All Might’s palm connects with her face, covering her mouth, and a part of Katsuki wonders if it’s deliberate even as she kicks her leg up and meets his eyes with an ugly smile twisting behind his hand as she channels a spark that sets off an explosion that tears her shoe and forces him to go low as she twists, using his arm as a hanger for her knees as she aimed for his left side, his *weak side*, with enough force that the ground beneath them cracks where his feet digs in to keep steady.

The Hero grunts and Katsuki snarls as arms hook around her, *too fast* even with the weighs on his arms and legs, and she finds air torn from her lungs as she’s bent back and slammed hard into the ground with an ugly noise and a jarring of her bones that makes her taste blood as her teeth snaps down on her tongue.

A large heavy hand grasps at the front of her shirt and he throws her, sending her skidding over the ground, tearing her skin open as she comes into a hard *smack* against one of the towering fake buildings around them.

Katsuki *whooshes*, air momentarily torn from her lungs, but she’s already pushing back and dives to avoid the fist that breaks concrete where she’d stood and she flattens down, twisting on her palms as she blows another explosion from her bare foot that makes him take a single step back as she scrambles up with a livid snarl.

“A weak barrage hurts, but only a little,” All Might tells her, towering, not a hair out of place as she gasps for one breath following the other, a single trickle of blood running from his lips before he wipes it away from his thumb. “Your temper does you no services.”

Katsuki’s heart thumps inside her bruised chest and malice drips as she bares bloody teeth.

“I get it...” the Hero murmurs almost thoughtfully. “This is all about Midoriya’s incredible growth, right?”

Deku? Katsuki’s mind wonders wildly as it halts in harried confusion.

What does Deku have to do with-

“When he starts at level one, and you at level fifty, naturally you’ll be growing at different rates.” There’s an almost soothing cadence to the Hero’s words but all Katsuki feels is a frothing, twisting sort of thing that fills her veins, circling with every wet thump of her heart.

“Don’t throw it all away!” All Might says, a single hand reaching out. “Don’t you see? You’ve still got time to grow! It’s not a matter of power but-“

All Might takes a step towards her.

I don’t want to die.

Katsuki’s palms explodes and she twists through the smoke and air, fist drawn back.

His brow dips and Katsuki doesn’t even have time to register the motion – one second his eyes are meeting hers and the next his fingers are sinking into her hair, grasping her skull tight before he slams her face into the concrete wall, her world exploding in white, and she gurgles.

His eyes are heavy with disappointment as he forces her head back, her hands curling around his wrist, leg twitching up, but *she’s not fast enough*.

The knee sinks into her sternum, ribs cracking, and Katsuki tastes blood and no breath and her mouth gapes for air that won’t come as he drops her carelessly, already turning his back.

I don’t want to die.

“Now, for Midoriya.”

I don’t want to die.

-

*“Hey, Izuku? I’m going to be a Hero! I’m going to be **just like All Might.**”*

-

Katsuki stares at the sky.

“Kacchan?”

She turns her head, sees a boy that lived when the other didn't. Sees green eyes, bruised cheek, an arm curled clumsily over his chest.

"Why-" she rasps. "Do you want to be a Hero?"

Deku blinks at her. "I'm – I want to help people," he confesses quietly. "To save them with a smile! Just – just like All Might."

Katsuki's body hurts.

Something inside of her doesn't feel right.

"Let's work together," she says as she pushes up as he scrambles to his feet, hand hovering awkwardly as she slowly drew to her full-height.

"Kacchan?"

"I get it..."

She takes a step forward.

"It's all about Midoriya's incredible growth, right?"

She flexes her fingers, ignoring her left ring finger which twitches, broken.

All Might-

Her tongue strokes over her bloody teeth, finding at least two of them loose.

I... truly am nothing in his eyes, am I?

-

The sun is bright above them.

Katsuki hears the rain falling.

-

Something inside of her doesn't feel right.

Chapter End Notes

I actually love All Might. He's an absolutely fascinating character to me but Aizawa is absolutely correct in that he doesn't make a good teacher.

I think he absolutely grows into the role, esp after his fight with AFO, but his blatant favoritism when it comes to Midoriya alone should have been a blaring warning sign.

He's a good Hero but he's... hm. I dunno, I have a lot of thoughts about him and him nearly breaking Midoriya's back during the exam... Compared to how the other teachers went about it? Absolutely brutal.

Most of his lines are taken directly from the manga.

We're almost at the summer camp arc and I'm just very excited about it.

Thank you for your absolutely wonderful comments! You make it an absolute joy to write and share this with you guys.

I'm artsy-death on tumblr and this has been chapter 12 of In The End.

I hope you enjoyed!

Repercussions

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Something is wrong.

The feeling nags at him and Shouta shifts a bit restlessly the longer the distant absence of explosions stretches without an announcement from All Might.

Todoroki and Yaoyorozu had already been sent off to stop by Recovery Girl before showering and changing. They'd done well – he's proud of them both and he'd told them as much. The exams were, predominantly a way for them, as teachers, to measure their growth and construct a challenge for them to overcome.

Which is why All Might's strange insistence on taking on Bakugou and Midoriya both makes him wary.

Nedzu had allowed it, in the end, despite Shouta's recommendation to pair Bakugou up against the Principal. Bakugou is clever and he needed to be pressed to think on his feet not just in fighting – to figure out how to work around and with problems and find an out of it without his quirk.

Nedzu would have been an excellent opponent.

But instead he'd set the boy up against All Might, who he clearly had issues with, and Midoriya, who he had some sort of history with.

Shouta can't even discredit the argument All Might had made, no matter that it didn't sit well with him. He has a bad feeling this is one of the Number One Hero's ugly moments of favouritism rearing its head again.

He doesn't know what is going on, exactly, between All Might and Midoriya but it's there and the teacher inside of him is concerned because Midoriya is *reckless* and All Might clearly isn't doing enough to reign him in. In worst case scenario it's going to get the boy killed.

“Eraser! Hey, hey, hey – are you even listening to me?” Shouta turns to Hizashi just in time to watch him give a full-body shudder, Kouda and Jirou trailing off companionably towards Recovery Girl behind

him. "Your students are rascals," his partner informs him. "There were bugs *everywhere*."

"I heard your scream," Shouta answers a bit distractedly.

Hizashi opens his mouth and then closes it, leaning closer. "You're worried," he observes. "Shinsou alright?"

The purple haired boy had been a bit of a strange addition to their household but Hizashi had clearly taken a shine to the boy and spent every moment he could prodding and poking at him, cajoling him into movie nights and games and ice cream rounds and whatever else Hizashi considered a good time.

They'd sat him down and talk about boundaries, how they at school were his teachers first and foremost, and he'd taken it seriously, accepting it for what it was before asking if he could tell Bakugou.

Shouta had allowed it, a bit surprised that the anti-social boy had been brought up, but apparently their new charge had taken a liking to the volatile boy.

Nemuri had been very amused by it.

"He passed," Shouta tells him, eyes sliding back to the trees and the building stretching up above them in the distance. "He made a good team with Kirishima against Cementoss, I was informed. Although we need to have a talk with Kirishima, apparently his first idea was just to slug at it."

Mic winces. "Ouch."

"Something like that," Shouta agrees drily.

Hizashi puts a hand on his hip, the other rising to give a tug at his moustache. "I'm guessing All Might haven't checked back then?"

Shouta grunts, shifting on his feet.

There's sudden static in both their ears and Shouta stills as All Might clears his throat across the channel.

"Recovery Girl? We... have a situation."

-

"- excessive violence!"

Shouta stares at the boy in the bed, something cold in his chest as Bakugou rasps for breath, teeth gritted and hunched over as Recovery Girl tried to simultaneously chew out All Might while prodding him into lying back down.

He'd been unconscious when All Might brought him in, looking unfairly small in the large Hero's arms, Midoriya hovering a bit panicky at his side before Mic had exchanged a look with Shouta and snagged the boy along and out of the room to check him over.

Bakugou is an ugly mess of dark, nearly black, bruises. More than one rib juts strangely beneath the mess of old burn scars, his arm limp and very near blown to bits by his side, and Shouta counts at least four broken fingers.

One of his feet is missing a shoe, the toes bent and skin charred in places, and there's scratches and places where his skin had just scraped clean off. Hand sized bruises lingers on his upper arms, dipping down from the crown of his head, one eye swollen completely shut in the bruised side of his face, nose broken and jaw dislocated, gums baring bloody in a grimace.

Midoriya had looked – better. But there were some broken ribs there and his arm had been limp and red where he'd over used his quirk, bruised and with blood dripping from a broken nose and hunched over in a way that indicated that his back had likely taken the brunt of it.

Shouta doesn't know what All Might had been thinking.

This – is completely beyond acceptable.

"All Might," Shouta says sharply. "A word."

All Might straightens, turning away from Bakugou who had looked ready to take to the window, and Shouta doesn't miss the way the boy relaxes minutely as the Number One Hero steps away from him, a dark wary eye slowly focusing onto Recovery Girl as Shouta drew the door shut behind them.

"Aizawa–"

"Listen to me," Shouta interrupts him, rounding on the other. "You and I are going to have a long overdue conversation, All Might. What the *hell* do you think that was? They're *children* and you – did you even *look at him?*" Shouta demands, furious and just biting back a

snarl as he digs cold eyes into the other. "That boy is *terrified* of you—"

"Don't exaggerate," All Might huffs but Shouta catches a brief flicker of ill-ease in his eyes before he covers it up. "I thought about the best way to get them to work together and they *did*. They teamed up once I showed them that they couldn't win separately and they fulfilled the task."

"You—" Shouta grasps for patience that isn't there. "You honestly see nothing wrong with this picture?" he manages, disbelievingly. "There's a boy in here who is struggling to *breathe* because the Number One Hero couldn't, what, figure out a better way to get two teenage boys to work together?"

"Bakugou-shounen is stubborn," All Might says, lips moving into a thin line. "Volatile and prone to violence. He has a long road to becoming a Hero and he needs to learn not to rely on brute force."

"And you thought *beating him half to death* was the way to do it!?" Shouta demands, taking a step forward, ignoring the way All Might's muscled form rippled momentarily, dry eyes itching as his quirk threatened to flare. "He needs *guidance*. He needs to learn how to *trust* us and understand that he isn't alone and that there are better ways to work things out. But instead you—" Shouta clenches his fist, hissing out a harsh breath. "We're *Heroes*. I don't know what that means to you, All Might, but to me it means *not* leaving a child beat up in a fucking *hospital bed* terrified out his damn *mind*."

"Midoriya—"

"This," Shouta says with a dangerous curl of his lips. "Has nothing to do with Midoriya. And so help me, All Might, if you've made this into another quick fix of whatever problem those two need to work out on their own and between themselves because of your fixation on that boy."

All Might straightens. "I made a decision," he says slowly, eyes blue and heavy as he regards Shouta.

"To use *excessive force* on two *teenage boys*," Shouta hisses out. "One of them who, notably, returned back on his own two feet while the other was beaten *unconscious*. Colour me not impressed."

All Might draws his arms across his chest, looming, and a lesser man would have been intimidated but Shouta knows posturing and his hand snaps out, sinking into the fabric of the other man's suit and

giving him a harsh tug down to put them eye to eye.

He has no illusions of his strength, knows it's surprise alone that allows him to do it, but he knots his muscles tense to keep him there and levels the other under his glare.

"You listen to me, All Might. Bakugou is *my* student and right now I don't want you anywhere near him, do you understand me? We are going to have a long talk with Nedzu and I'm very sure I'm not the only one who is going to have words with you. This is so completely beyond acceptable, I don't care for whatever reason or excuse you've given yourself because we're *Heroes* and we're supposed to be *better than this*."

"Aizawa-

"Do. You. Understand. Me?" Shouta demands, giving him a harsh tug.

All Might breathes out, a deep heavy sound, and it strikes Shouta just how *old* the other Pro-Hero is as he inclines his head. "Very well," he relents.

Shouta releases him.

"Midoriya is with Hizashi and you're going to go home and *think*," Shouta says, stepping back from him. "Don't bother coming in for the rest of the week."

"That is not your decision to make," All Might says mildly. "There are things going on that you're not aware of. It's crucial that you allow me to keep training young Midoriya."

Shouta grits his teeth. "Fine," he says shortly. "But you're not taking a single step inside my classroom."

Shouta draws a deep breath as All Might makes his way down the corridor, forcing himself to calm down even as his heart thrums hard in his chest, slowly levelling his breathing into something more acceptable before pushing back into the room.

A crimson eye darts up towards him, shoulders bunching momentarily before slowly relaxing, but the eye remain warily on him even as Recovery Girl fusses over his ribs.

She'd managed to wrap most of him up in bandages, fingers and toes set straight, a large patch over his swollen eye. While the damage was

extensive the physical wounds were fixable and Shouta breathes out in a sigh.

“He has a concussion,” Chiyo informs him briskly. “And that’s not even the beginning of it.”

Shouta settles down on the low stool beside the bed near his student who twitches and draws his hand closer and away from him. Shouta observes it with a heavy heart but can’t blame him – not when he feels ultimately responsible for the way things had gone down despite knowing there was little he could do about it once Nedzu made his decision.

“How are you feeling?” he asks heavily.

“I’m *fine*,” Bakugou rasps, eye shifting away.

“To be frank,” Chiyo says with carefully held back frustration. “You’re *not* and we can’t send you home like this. You need someone with medical training to keep an eye on you and make sure nothing flares up. My quirk can only heal so much and the damage is extensive.” This she directs to Shouta who inclines his head in understanding.

Bakugou’s teeth clenches down.

“We have an extra bed, if you want to,” Shouta offers quietly. “Or any of the other teachers, if that would make you more comfortable. We can also contact the hospital and make arrangements for you to stay the night.”

The boy eyes him warily, distrust written in every line of his body, and Shouta resolves to have a long conversation with him at the earliest opportunity.

“Shinsou-“ Bakugou grits out, tongue dragging over bloody teeth. “He’s staying with you.”

“He is,” Shouta agrees.

“Fine,” he huffs. “But you-“ He coughs, a grimace flittering over his face as he fought not to hunch over. “You’re calling kaa-san.”

-

“I can carry you,” Aizawa says as Katsuki carefully inches her way to the edge of the bed. “Or Mic can but there’s no way you’ll get out of

here on your own without worsening your injuries.”

Katsuki glares down at her wrapped foot, a dull sort of thumping in her chest, feeling a strange sort of heaviness as her head throbs and she struggles against a bout of nausea as she draws one careful breath after the other.

“Present Mic-“

“I’ll go get him,” Aizawa promises and Katsuki stares after him as he ducks out without argument or comment.

She grits her teeth, frustrated with her own weakness.

“Well, aren’t you just a pretty sight.” Shinsou’s voice makes her head snap up and she has to squeeze her eye shut as the world dips, her good fingers curling around the edge of the bed to anchor herself and regretting the sudden motion. “Whoa-“ His voice comes close and she reluctantly pries her eye open, slowly relaxing her tense muscles. “He got you good,” the purple haired boy says in a strangely subdued voice and Katsuki finds his hand just inches from her arm before it slowly lowers.

“Mic will be here in a sec, he’s on the phone with Kayama-san,” Shinsou informs her. “Aizawa is getting the car.”

Katsuki’s mouth flattens out and she turns her head away.

“You passed,” Shinsou says as he sinks down on the chair Aizawa had vacated. “As did Ashido and I. Aizawa said you might not remember – you were unconscious when they brought you in here. Midoriya was in quite the state.”

Katsuki swallows, tasting blood.

“You didn’t hear it,” Shinsou continues, unperturbed. “But Aizawa really let All Might have it. I wasn’t supposed to hear it but, well. I was around.” His shoulders lifts in a shrug.

Katsuki slants him a look and then up as the door opened and Present Mic stepped inside.

“Hello, little listeners,” he says, leathers traded for a soft green shirt with a thin summer jacket thrown over it. “I hear my aid is needed.” He sidles up beside her and Katsuki catches the way his lips dips slightly before he smiles. “Come on,” he says gently. “Let’s get you

home.”

It takes a bit of careful shifting but Katsuki finds herself with her arms wrapped around the man’s neck, hands beneath her knees, and she has no illusions she isn’t heavy from packed muscles but the man hardly seems to notice despite his wiry build.

“Lead the way, Hitoshi.” Present Mic nudges at the purple haired boy and Shinsou shrugs but takes point, opening the door wide for them to pass through before letting it close behind them.

Present Mic smells like leather and hair gel and Katsuki hesitantly rests her chin on top of his shoulder, tired, eye flagging a bit at the rhythmic motion of steps below her.

-

Katsuki is half-asleep when they finally arrive at the house and Shinsou nudges her twice before gently being shooed aside and Katsuki mumbles tiredly as an arm settles against her bruised back before the other swoops beneath her knees as she’s hauled up with a noise of protest.

“We’re almost there,” Aizawa’s voice comes close to her ear and Katsuki tenses as she pries her eye open, focusing a bit blurrily at the visage of her homeroom teacher.

He looks tired, Katsuki thinks through the nausea and pain.

She grimaces but forces herself to relax as they step through the door and she finds herself gently settled down on the couch.

Shinsou throws a blanket into her lap and she gives him a flat look that makes his mouth curl at the corner.

“You look tired,” he tells her bluntly. “All Might sure didn’t hold back.”

“No,” Katsuki says slowly. “He did not.”

“Which is why,” Aizawa says as he steps up in front of her before crouching down. “All Might is going to have a meeting with Nedzu and I before the end of the week.”

“Like a naughty little student?” Shinsou asks with a kick of his foot.

“He’s just as responsible for his actions as any of us and his use of

excessive force today was inexcusable. Had I know this is what he had planned I would have put a stop to it.” Aizawa’s mouth draws into a thin line. “If I had my way he never would have become a teacher in the first place,” he says slowly but strongly, meeting Katsuki’s eye as her head lifts. “That man is a good Hero but he’s far from a good teacher and he crossed many lines today.”

“I bet he’s going to be released with a slap on the wrist,” Shinsou says cynically and Aizawa grimaces but doesn’t disagree.

Faintly, ever so faintly, Katsuki can hear the sound of rain that isn’t there.

“I-“ Katsuki licks her lips. ”I don’t understand,” she admits, grimacing. “He was-“

“You have a concussion,” Aizawa interrupts her quietly. “Whatever you’re thinking about can wait to the morning when you’re in a better state of mind.” He hesitates, eyes searching hers. “You need to stay with one of us tonight. You can either stay in Shinsou’s room as one of us takes his bed. Or you can stay with us in our bed like last time.”

Katsuki blinks at him, mind a sluggish mess and her body a blotchy letter of violence.

“Your bed is fine,” she says quietly.

Aizawa offers her a small encouraging smile, or maybe a grimace, it’s a bit hard to tell with the world dipping and weaving around her.

-

Katsuki finds herself in the uncomfortable situation of needing help to change, unable to bend her body forward without her ribs shifting uncomfortably, and she keeps her eye on the ceiling as Aizawa helps her into fresh underwear, discarding the bloody ones before guiding her into a large comfy hoodie.

She finds that it’s the same one from last time and her hand presses against the impossibly soft pink fabric of it, eye flicking up to watch him as he tugged the covers aside as she leant against the dresser on one foot, feeling vaguely woozy.

She can distantly make out the sound of voices in the kitchen as she focuses on her breathing.

“The others will join us after they’ve eaten dinner,” Aizawa says quietly as he changes out of his Hero clothing and into a simple t-shirt and sweats, his capture weapon pooling into the seat of the chair he throws it upon. “You need to drink some water but I suspect you might be too nauseous to actually eat anything of substance.”

Katsuki grimaces in agreement.

The last time she’d slept in their bed had been during an episode of disassociation and while Katsuki isn’t feeling her best she’s relatively clear headed and the whole prospect feels far more intimate than she knows what to do with.

She’d slept in his parents plenty of times, after episodes, during episodes, on off-days and good-days when she craved a sense of realness in a world that didn’t make much sense.

But Aizawa is her teacher – in some ways her own age, in others not.

Sixteen-thirty.

He steps towards her, telegraphing his motions clearly as he ducks beneath her arm and she allows him to help her the last bit to the bed, nausea curling in her gut with the jerky limping movement, and she grits her teeth as she slowly sinks down on the edge of the bed.

The door opens with a small knock and Midnight steps inside with a small grimace of sympathy, a bottle of water in her hand and a bucket beneath her arm.

“Concussions aren’t very fun,” the woman says as she steps forward and drops the bucket down on the floor near her pillow. “But the best cure is to sleep and you have the day off tomorrow. Shouta will stick around to keep you company so you won’t be on your own and Recovery Girl will stop by to give you another dose of her quirk somewhere around lunch time.” Katsuki blinks as a hand threads through the spikes of her hair. “If everything goes as it should you’ll be home tomorrow afternoon.”

“Did you call kaa-san and tou-san?” she asks, swallowing the yawn that her jaw would very much not agree to with a brief clenching of her teeth.

“Of course,” Midnight agrees. “Mitsuki-san has already arranged a meeting with Nedzu tomorrow morning and they both sent their best wishes for a speedy recovery.” Katsuki grunts, accepting the bottle of

water as she holds it forward.

But her fingers are broken and clumsy and Aizawa carefully tugs it out of her hands, unscrewing the lid before handing it back, and Katsuki takes a slow cautious sip.

It's not her first concussion but there's still something jarred inside of her, as if she'd been rattled and left less than before, and the feeling sits odd inside her chest as she pauses, giving her stomach time to come to terms with the liquid before taking another swallow and lowering it down into her lap.

The boy had loved All Might and the remains of it clings to her in the forms of dreams and memories and a feverish sort of *want* and she'd come to U.A. in a hope to make sense of it. To make something of a dead boy's wants in a broken world she feels disconnected and wrong-footed in, tasting violence as a means to feel *something*.

And instead-

"Whatever you're thinking of," Aizawa says as he tugs the bottle of out her hands. "It can wait until the morning."

Katsuki swallows and lowers her head.

It's stiff work, getting her body down and against the pillow and Midnight smiles at her before wishing her a good night as Aizawa turns his back to allow her the privacy of it and she sinks down with a low careful exhalation.

Aizawa slumps down beside her, one arm behind his head and a tired sigh she feels echoed in her very soul.

"I don't know what All Might told you today," Aizawa says quietly, the small spring at the door casting a low light into the room. "But you have all the makings of a fine Hero."

She turns her head, looking at him.

Katsuki is volatile, reckless, anti-social and angry. So so very *angry*. She's made up of pieces that slots together in an ill-fit mess of memories and impressions.

She can't stand the rain because it makes her think of a dead woman and she can't stand All Might for he makes her think of a dead boy.

She feels small in a too big world that laughs and mocks her and tries to fix her.

“Did I-“ Katsuki hesitates. “At the Sports Festival-“

“Bakugou-“

“At the *Sports Festival*,” she continues, stronger, swallowing the taste of iron. “I didn’t get it,” she tells those dark eyes. “I just-“ She licks her lips. “It was a *bad* win. I wanted – a re-match, something. I wanted *fairness* and instead-“ She quiets. “All Might is supposed to be the Number One Hero and he-“

A hand touches gently against her lips, quieting her, and she finds Aizawa pushed up on his elbow, an emotion in his dark eyes that she struggles to read.

“All Might is a complicated man,” Aizawa says after a long moment. “He is undeniable a good Hero, a symbol of hope for the large of society. But he is, in the end, just a man. He’s just as capable of making mistakes as any of us. For one reason or the other he has something beyond the walls of U.A. driving him and I don’t agree with putting him here as a teacher because all it’s done is paint a target on my class.”

“Midoriya...” Katsuki says slowly, thinking of the Pro-Hero’s strange fixation with the green haired boy. “He used to be quirkless.”

Inside of her the boy is quiet and Katsuki grimaces, missing the way Aizawa’s gaze sharpens.

“We- grew up together. It’s been years since I last saw him but... I remember that,” Katsuki admits quietly.

She feels jagged and raw, as if she’d been pried open and left bare.

Katsuki wakes up in a world of noise after twenty-two years of silence. She wakes up to strangers touching her, in a body that isn’t hers, and the memories of a dead boy clinging to the remains of a dead woman who chokes and drowns because of the man she’d loved.

She wakes up in a world that is *too much* and she lashes out in the only way that makes *sense*.

In some ways, All Might had been her goal. The boy had adored him, had looked up to him, and the emotions remain in a tangled mess of

what they'd become and she feels empty – robbed of the dream that had been and she doesn't know what to *do*.

What was the point of becoming a Hero? What was the point of clinging to the dreams of a dead boy when his Hero was nothing but a-

Aizawa's hand touches against her brow, stroking back her hair, and Katsuki blinks as he does it again, petting her, and somehow it eases some of the harried fragmented bits of her mind, quieting it.

"I was angry at you," Katsuki tells him thickly. "I think I still am."

"That is fine," Aizawa says quietly. "Go to sleep – we'll figure things out in the morning."

Chapter End Notes

In where Aizawa is *not having it*.

Next chapter: Katsuki and Aizawa has a well-deserved talk before we haul us the last bit towards the summer camp arc.

For those who are curious since I made some changes to the rooster:

Shinsou and Kirishima VS Cementoss: Both Pass.

Asui and Tokoyami VS Ectoplasm: Both Pass

Ojiro and Iida VS Power Loader: Both Pass

Todoroki and Yoyorozu VS Eraserhead: Both Pass

Uraraka and Ashido VS Thirteen: Both Pass

Satou and Kaminari VS Nedzu: Both Fail

Jirou and Kouda VS Present Mic: Both Pass

Shouji and Hagakure VS Snipe: Both Pass

Aoyama and Sero VS Midnight: Both Fail

I have my reasons for all the match-ups, I spent far too much time thinking about it but Shinsou flipped things around a bit since he couldn't go up against any of his guardians because Aizawa wouldn't risk any favoritism. He wanted a fair assessment so here we are.

Midnight spent a long time on the phone with Masaru and Mitsuki off-screen. They have their reasons for allowing it, too, which we'll explore in later chapters.

Thank you for all the wonderful comments, I've spent the moments between writing this reading and rereading them and it is with delight I haul this up.

I spent the day writing it up so my back is killing me a bit and I have work in the morning so I'm off to bed on that note.

I hope you enjoyed!

Peachy

Chapter Notes

Raccoon Eyes = Ashido

Half-n-Half = Todoroki

Sparky = Kaminari

Deku = Midoriya

See Through = Hagakure

Punk = Jirou

《Hey》 = sign-language

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Katsuki goes to sleep at the very edge of the bed but she wakes up with a grunt to find herself with her head pillowed on Aizawa's chest. Her teacher is already awake, a rough copy of a book angled to catch some light from the lamp on the opposite end of the bed where Present Mic was sprawled out, hand beneath his shirt and snoring softly. Between Present Mic and Aizawa Midnight is sleeping on her front, one arm beneath her head, mouth slack with sleep.

"Morning," Aizawa says quietly and Katsuki squints tiredly at the alarm clock to catch the numbers 05:08.

"Did you even sleep?" she mumbles, voice coming out rough and hoarse and she grimaces. "No wonder you always look so fucking tired."

He huffs as she slowly pushes up and onto her rump, legs folding as she drew a shaky hand thorough her hair, bruises and pains making themselves reminded as her shoulder cried out in response to the motion. All Might had nearly torn her arm right out of the socket as he threw her and she knew she was lucky not to have fucked it up worse than she had.

She lets it fall into her lap as Aizawa closes his book.

"Think you're up to eating something?"

Katsuki considers it. "Smoothie?"

"I think I can manage that," Aizawa says a tad drily as he draws himself up, looking tired and ragged, his hair even messier than usual

and making no attempt to correct it as his bare feet touched down against the floor. "There are towels in the cupboard in the hallway if you want to take a shower."

-

The warm water feels good against her body and Katsuki tilts her head up, eyes closing.

Her mind feels messy, shaken, caught wrong-footed in the aftermath of her match-up against All Might and she doesn't even remember passing. *Unconscious*, Shinsou had said, and she'd woken up in a hospital bed what only sheer will keeps her from spiralling from.

Katsuki hates hospitals. Had spent too long with the noise and unwanted touches, the beep of the machine and the mask over her face forcing her lungs to expand, her throat thick and raw around the tube shoved down it.

"I get it... It's all about Midoriya's incredible growth, right?"

Katsuki doesn't understand it.

She can count her conversations with Deku in recent times on one hand. She avoided him when she could and after the match-up at the beginning of their Hero lessons no-one had put her up against him.

Something gnaws inside her chest, ugly and twisted up.

All Might and Deku are close, it's the worst fucking kept secret *ever*. The man picks him up with homemade *bentos* and he always has a steadying hand and offered praise during their lessons, pride so very visible on his face as he looks upon his young charge.

"They're nothing alike!" Deku had exclaimed during their trip to the USJ when Froggy pointed out the similarities between his quirk and All Might's. *"All Might is... All Might! And I keep... I keep breaking my bones. It's- we're really nothing alike!"*

Liar, she'd thought but she hadn't known *what he was lying about*.

Deku is quirkless, only he isn't, and he goes from breaking his bones to one of the fastest growing in their class and *Katsuki is fucking suspicious*.

None of my business, she'd thought when she saw the hollowed form of

All Might through the mist in the USJ but they'd *made it* her fucking business.

Katsuki thinks about reports of dwindling appearances, thinks of three fingers held up by Thirteen to a grim look from Aizawa, thinks of a teacher who never makes more of an appearance than he needs to and is always quick to excuse himself. Thinks of a Hero with a *weak left side* which she exploits to a grunt and-

Katsuki presses her forehead against the cool tiles.

Is she paranoid? Could such a thing even *be done*?

Katsuki wakes up in a world of impossibilities and she can't say *no* because her very existence shouldn't be possible but she stings and aches and feels and thinks and breathe and *lives*.

"For one reason or the other," Aizawa tells her, *"he has something beyond the walls of U.A. driving him and I don't agree with putting him here as a teacher because all it's done is paint a target on my class."*

It sounds like the stuff right out of a bad Hero manga.

Deku- the boy chosen by the Number One Hero to carry his power and Katsuki, what? The childhood rival that he grew for a way to measure his growth against?

But why else would he be here? She thinks just a tad feverishly. *Why else would All Might concern himself on such a personal level with the Deku?*

And for what reason? Why the *hurry*?

Katsuki's mind chews and chews and hates and hates. It tangles inside of her in a web of dark feelings and she wants-

For just a brief naked moment of longing she wants nothing more than for *Dabi* to be there.

He'd been her constant for almost four years – appearing when she was at her lowest, sickly looking with the stretch of burn scars and staples that kept him together.

He's there, cigarette offered as she's staring out at the world she'd woken up in and laughing as lungs, unused to the smoke, tried to cough it up.

Congratulations to a shitty win, he texts her after the Sports Festival and

Katsuki *hates it* because he understands her in ways that others doesn't, gets her on a primal level that's addicting and ugly in the way his flames burns into her skin in wraps of blue.

Dabi isn't answering her texts and Katsuki hates that it fucking *hurts*.

There is no-one to text, no-one to meet up with and resolve the mess of her mind, instead she has no choice to let it lie and *rot*.

Above her the water runs lukewarm and finally cold, stiffening already aching muscles, and Katsuki squeezes her eyes tightly shut as she palms for the closest body wash.

-

"We need to have a talk," Aizawa tells her as she's sipping carefully on a cool smoothie made of berries and yoghurt.

She smells like fucking *peaches* and Katsuki regrets every morning decision that made her pick Present Mic's body wash over the flowery scent of whatever Midnight used. Even Aizawa's would have been better.

She fucking *hates* peaches.

"You said as much yesterday," Katsuki reminds him, teeth clenching down, because she doesn't *want* to talk.

What was there to say anyway?

All Might had made his choices, as had the school, and Katsuki is, apparently, just a chess piece in a far larger game – easily discarded for the better of the world. All Might is the Symbol of Peace, the world needs him far more than they need her and that's the easy truth of the matter.

She doesn't understand why it weighs heavy in her chest, makes her skin feel clammy and cold.

"I did," Aizawa says with a heavy voice and Katsuki raises her gaze up to meet his dark eyes across the table in the small homely looking kitchen.

Most days Katsuki doesn't know what to make of him. The man is gruff, blunt, not uncaring, she knows, because she'd seen his elbow nearly crumble to dust in an effort to look after his students. But he

didn't hesitate to push their limits, didn't hesitate to lie under the guise of a *ruse* and he was an Underground Hero who craved neither fame nor money for his time.

He's far from the idealized Heroes on the television and she thinks that she can respect that, in an off way, for all that him being her teacher puts another spin entirely on their relationship.

She thinks that he's handsome and she thinks that he smells good and he has impeccable hoodie taste and she's not ready to let go of the one she's wearing quite so easily this time.

A clock ticks on the wall.

"What happened yesterday should never have happened," Aizawa says bluntly and Katsuki's mouth thins in response. "I would like to hear, from you, why you think it went down the way it did."

Because All Might has already decided on the next Symbol of Peace and he's going to cross any obstacle to make it happen.

Because Deku is fucking obsessed with a dead boy and whatever they talk about during their cosy little chats has completely warped All Might's perception of me.

Katsuki does not say either of these things.

"Because All Might made a decision," she says instead with a listless shrug. "And then he went through with it."

Aizawa's eyes are hard to read and Katsuki lowers her gaze, looking away.

"The exams exist for us as teacher to measure your growth as prospective Heroes." Aizawa drags a tired hand through his messy hair. "We work from a position of power and there are rules and regulations in regards how we conduct ourselves, how much force we use, things like that, to make sure we don't abuse it."

Katsuki's fingers curls tight around the cool glass of the smoothie.

"There is a case to make if you want to," Aizawa offers and Katsuki snorts a bitter laugh because-

"And screw everything up for myself?" she asks with an ugly twist of her lips. "The world would never forgive me."

“No,” Aizawa agrees heavily. “It would not. But I want you to know the option is there because All Might crossed a line yesterday. Favouritism is one thing but when it went out over you it reached a point where it can’t be ignored.”

Katsuki draws her shoulders tight. “It sounds like a fucking joke, you know that? Yeah, it was alright until, what, he decided to beat me unconscious because Midoriya is a fucking *gossip*?”

“What, exactly, did he say to you yesterday?” Aizawa pries.

“*Why* do you care?” Katsuki demands, looking up sharply. “You want it word for word and then fucking *what*?”

“I want to know because to even begin approaching it I need to know the cause of it.” Aizawa leans forward. “You might not be aware of it but Midoriya speaks a lot about you. Even I find it hard to miss and All Might spends a lot of time with him. For better or for worse Midoriya looks up to you, admires you, no-matter your feelings on the matter.”

Katsuki stares at him.

“He does *what* now?” she demands, mind reeling. “He doesn’t even *know me*.”

“But he *did* know you,” Aizawa points out, the smartass, and Katsuki tugs at her hair with a growl of frustration.

“When we were *kids*,” Katsuki snarls out. “It’s been eight fucking *years*. Whatever hang-up he has is completely of his own fucking *making*. It has nothing to do with *me*.”

“All Might seems to think otherwise and there-in lies the problem in the situation.” Aizawa’s eyes narrows and Katsuki feels a shiver run down her spine, had seen just what he was capable of during the mess at the USJ and wary because of it. “Did something happen?” Aizawa asks, the sudden change of conversation jarring as Katsuki jerks minutely “That made you and Midoriya stop talking?” he clarifies.

“I know you’ve read my files,” Katsuki growls with a curl of her lips.

“I’ve read them,” Aizawa agrees bluntly. “But that’s not what I’m asking.”

She bares her teeth. “Nothing that concerns *you*.”

"I disagree." Aizawa regards her, eyes unreadable. "I think it very much does. As your teacher you are my responsibility and your records make it very clear that you didn't get out of that fall anywhere near a clear state of mind and you're still suffering from the aftermath of it."

The words are blunt, giving Katsuki little in a way to hide the instinctive little flinch, arms drawing tight around her chest.

"The thing is, that there is nothing that points to *why*." Katsuki stares at him, mouth flat. "It worries me," Aizawa says, his voice gentler now but no-less serious. "You're deeply suspicious, to the point of paranoia. You struggle with interacting with your peers and you hate being touched. You don't know how to resolve with whatever happened and you lash out because of it. You're on a downward spiral of self-destruction and you don't even seem to realise it."

Katsuki draws tighter on herself, fingers sinking into the bruises on her arms, anchoring herself in the aches and reminders.

"I want to help you," Aizawa says quietly. "But I cannot unless you allow me to."

"I don't trust you." Katsuki struggles against a frail sort of hope and anger as she stares at the man. "Why the fuck would I tell you *anything*."

"Because you need to talk to someone and for one reason or the other you won't talk with your parents."

And how fucking could she when she'd as good as murdered their son, swanning around in his body as if she had a right to it? They wouldn't believe her. No one would believe her. She'd be hospitalized, again, and Katsuki doubts that, this time, they would let her out anytime soon.

She cannot – *will not* – allow that to happen.

There are days where even she wonders if everything isn't just a bad hallucination and she's screwed herself over completely by her own making.

"Maybe nothing happened," she says with a smile that stretches without joy. "Maybe I'm just fucked up and there's nothing for you to *fix*."

“I don’t want to fix you,” Aizawa says flatly. “I want to *help you*.”

“It’s the same fucking shit in the end, isn’t it?” Katsuki’s heart and body hurts and she’s *tired*. “You think I didn’t hear them, at the hospital? Everyone just sees something that’s twisted up and wrong and I’m fucking tired of it, alright? I know I’m messed up – I’m not fucking *stupid*. But I’m not some kind of – some kind of *pet project*.”

“I never said you were,” Aizawa rebukes. “You’re my student and I’m here to make you into the best Hero you can be and sometimes that means dealing with the messier part of things. It’s a part of life and simply makes you *human*.”

Katsuki doesn’t feel much like a human – she’s an abomination in the universe, something *wrong* that shouldn’t be and yet is.

“You think Heroes do the kind of things they do and don’t pay the price for it?” Aizawa breathes out. “Mental health issues in the Hero industry is far more common than the media would like it to be and while they do their absolute best to cover it up it’s *there*. We learn to cope and that’s what I want for you.”

“To cope,” Katsuki echoes blankly.

“To cope,” Aizawa agrees. “There is no quick fix for trauma and I won’t pretend there is. I don’t know what happened, and I won’t unless you tell me, but something did – so much you do not deny.”

Katsuki grimaces because he isn’t *wrong*.

“All Might issue aside,” Aizawa says, just a tad drily. “I’m here and I want you to talk to me. Big or small – any sort of concern you have, we can figure it out together.”

Katsuki stares at him for a long moment, not sure what to feel.

“Anything?” she asks finally.

“Anything,” Aizawa affirms.

She lowers her gaze to the table, considering it.

“What-“ she licks her lips. “What do you do when someone ignores you?”

Aizawa gives her such a blank look that for a second Katsuki wonders if she’d magically gone and sprouted horns. It doesn’t help when his

hand slowly rises to cover his eyes before sinking down over his mouth with a suspicious little twitch of his facial muscles.

“Okay,” he says.

“Okay?” Katsuki echoes, affronted.

-

Aizawa is a terrible help and Katsuki digs her spoon into the oatmeal in front of her with some aggressiveness. He hadn't laughed at her but it *felt* like he had. And Katsuki had some legitimate concerns!

So what if it wasn't out of character for Dabi to just drop off the fucking edge of the earth? And so what if he'd done it before, returning at his own damn pace? She was just supposed to – what? Accept it?

Move on?

“That oatmeal must have done a terrible thing to you,” Shinsou drawls as he shuffles into the kitchen, still in his pyjamas. “I'm surprised you haven't exploded it yet, from the way you're glaring.”

“Fuck off,” Katsuki growls. “Why the hell are you up?”

“You say that as if I slept,” Shinsou snorts and Katsuki eyes the deep bags beneath his eyes before scoffing, dropping her spoon with some disgust. “You're looking better – eye isn't swollen shut anymore and you look less like a dark bruise and more like a mottled pear.”

“Your concern is overwhelming,” Katsuki mutters. “And I'm not a *pear*.”

“Apple then?” Shinsou suggests, opening the fridge to rummage about. “Those bruise easily and you're obviously, ah, *delicate*.” He closes the door, unscrewing the lid of a milk carton and drinking directly from the mouth of it the *heathen*.

“That's disgusting,” Katsuki informs him with a curl of her lips.

“Eh.” Shinsou shrugs, wiping at his lips. “You should check the class chat, it's been going off since the matches yesterday. Apparently Hagakure spotted your unconscious body being hauled off to Recovery Girl.”

“I'm not in the class chat,” Katsuki says flatly.

“You are *now*,” Shinsou says with a fiendish little smirk that immediately makes Katsuki wary. “And I couldn’t just leave them to worry so being the kind person I am I let know how to reach you.”

Suspicious, Katsuki paws down her pockets for her phone which she’d dug from her backpack without looking at after showering and clicks it open, finding it with some 12% left and *far too many notifications*.

“You absolute *fucker*,” Katsuki breathes. “They have my *number*.”

Shinsou steps closer, peering over her shoulder as message after message crowds on the small rectangular screen, more incoming before their eyes.

“Did *no-one* fucking sleep?” Katsuki asks in disbelief, unfamiliar numbers with new messages, a chat bubble from an app Ashido had made her download staring back at her with a tiny three-digit number steadily growing in blaring red.

Katsuki ignores the class chat, pressing up her text-messages and pressing down blindly on one of them as Shinsou steps closer to peer over her shoulder.

“Morning, kiddos,” Present Mic’s voice reaches her distantly, Katsuki is too busy staring in mild horror at a text message from fucking Half-n-Half. As if it had *any* business being in her phone?

XXX-XXXXXX-XX: you should come over for lunch some day

XXX-XXXXXX-XX: if you’re still alive

XXX-XXXXXX-XX: this is Todoroki btw

“What the fuck?” Katsuki breathes.

“How friendly of him,” Shinsou says with a smirk. “Looks like you have a date.”

“Someone asked you for a date?” Present Mic whips around.
“Bakugou-“

To her horror Katsuki feels her cheeks colour. “It’s not a fucking *date*.”

“I don’t think even Midoriya has been over to his house,” Shinsou says smugly and Present Mic looks absolutely delighted. “Who knew *Todoroki* was so forward.”

Katsuki twitches, pressing out of the conversation and only just resisting the urge to delete it. She saves the number under *Half-n-Half Bastard* before clicking up the one from Ashido.

She finds an entire row of upset messages and she focuses on the last one.

RACCOON EYES: you better text me the moment you see this

I'm fine, Katsuki texts back, meaning to back out only to have three dots appear almost immediately followed by an uncomprehensive row of letters and then-

RACCOON EYES: I'VE BEEN SO WORRIED

RACCOON EYES: I'M NEVER LETTING YOU OUT OF MY SIGHT AGAIN

RACCOON EYES: YOU OWE ME A HUG

Katsuki stares blankly down at the words.

Fine, she texts back after a moment and then clicks out before her friend could respond.

She finds a wall of text from See Through, most of it rambling, informing her of how the others had done, who had passed and who hadn't, and then a bodily threat to her person that makes her twitch.

Most of it are generic well-wishes, she finds, and she deletes the majority of them from her phone.

"Ruthless," Shinsou whispers, impressed, as she deletes Deku's without reading it.

Punk had forgone pleasantries completely and sent a gif of a squirrel squaring up against a bear.

She ends up saving Punk's number and then fucking *Sparky's* because Shinsou leans forward with just a bit of too much interest and Katsuki resolves to sell him out at the earliest opportunity with something thoroughly embarrassing in revenge.

Katsuki looks at the 700+ messages in the app and removes the entire thing from her phone.

Midnight stares at her and Katsuki stares back, brow furrowing a bit unsurely as the woman let out a sigh before reaching forward to give her hair a tousle.

“Try to take it easy today, kid,” Midnight advises, hand still on top of Katsuki’s head. “There’s ice cream in the fridge, have at it. Don’t be surprised if you find Shouta napping in some odd spot. He’s hanging around to keep an eye on you so give him a kick if you need him for anything.”

Katsuki strongly suspects Aizawa would plot her murder if she did but she grunts out an agreement all the same.

“Are you telling anyone what happened?” Katsuki asks as Midnight pulls her hand back.

“Do you want us to?”

Katsuki gives her an unimpressed look and Midnight laughs. “I know you’re a private thing, hot-stuff. Official story is something along the lines of a *training accident*. Nedzu is trying to keep things out of the paper.”

Katsuki’s shoulders relaxes some.

She’d already been mocked and hounded for being chained by the Number One Hero, she wasn’t interested in anything else being started up because of the fuck-mess of an exam.

“You’re bit of an odd one but you’re not a bad kid. Try not to let what happened stick to you, alright?” Midnight says with a poke against her chest to a twitch before Katsuki half-heartedly shoves her hand away.

“m fucking *peachy*,” she grouses, the scent lingering on her skin and itching at her nose.

Midnight’s look speaks volumes of her disagreement and Katsuki scowls, trying not to feel self-conscious about the bruises still dark on her skin.

Chapter End Notes

Katsuki doesn't know it but that promised hug is the only thing standing between Ashido being absolutely ready to square up against All Might.

Katsuki has a lot piling up on her shoulders and it's not an easy thing to handle in a world of Hero politics.

All Might is in a pretty tricky situation himself, dealing with his failing body and the rising threat of AFO. He's not a bad person, in the end. Sometimes meaning well just isn't enough. Sometimes it leads to hurt. Everything has its repercussions and consequences. We're just dealing with them properly in this fic.

I like to think All Might is a child of his time, if that makes sense. I find it endlessly fascinating how he and Aizawa clashes in canon.

I know some of you were wondering why All Might made the call he did with Katsuki and the easy answer really is Midoriya. Because he cares. And All Might is limited with his interactions with his students outside him so he only ever sees Katsuki's more volatile side which is also an important factor here.

Next chapter: we take a trip to the Todoroki household.

Your comments give me such a buzz and I am endlessly happy to read them so thank you so much for your support and love <3

I hang about tumblr as artsy-death if you're about there and this has been chapter 14? Apparently?? Of In The End.

I hope you enjoyed!

A Visit

Chapter Notes

Half-n-Half = Todoroki

Deku = Midoriya

See Through = Hagakure

Round Cheeks = Uraraka

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

"Of course you gotta visit him!" Katsuki stares blankly down at the comic opened up on her bed as Ashido's voice comes bright with enthusiasm through the phone pressed between her shoulder and ear.

"... Shinsou told you, didn't he?"

"Of course he did," Ashido says smugly. *"He was worried you would just let such a wonderful opportunity as visiting Todoroki's **home** simply pass you right by."*

"Was he now," Katsuki says dryly.

Ashido hums. *"You are going, aren't you? Todoroki isn't the sort to do anything on a whim. You've got to be curious."*

"Not particularly," Katsuki admits, absently flipping a page. "Congratulations of passing by the way."

"Oh!" Ashido's voice rises in volume, flushed and pleased. *"We've both been working hard this semester, haven't we? I heard you got the highest score in class. And-"* she continues a tad drily, *"I am not a single bit distracted. Come on, Katsuki! It's a chance of a lifetime! I want all the juicy details. What kind of person is Todoroki really? A boxers or briefs kind of-"*

"Briefs," Katsuki interrupts, flipping another page, gaze trailing over the pictures and bubbles. "Particularly the tighty-whiteys kind."

"Way to just sell out a man's business, Katsuki," Ashido cackles. *"He does seem like the sort. But come ooon, Katsukiiii, I want to know what it's like living in the same house as someone as Endeavour. I mean – have you seen him on the television? He looks so grumpy."*

Katsuki opens her mouth.

And then she closes it.

Thinks of the easy way Half-n-Half's face had smoothed out, the way he moved almost nonchalantly despite the clear pain he had to be in.

It was familiar because Katsuki knew how to do the same.

But Half-n-Half wasn't the sort to get into brawls, his style was too stuffy.

He'd have to have learnt it elsewhere.

"Fine," she grunts with a sigh, rubbing at the back of her neck. "I'll go."

-

Clad in dark jeans slouched low on her hips, a shirt with an orange goldish on and a pair of slip-ons, Katsuki finds herself outside the Todoroki mansion with her backpack dangling from her shoulder.

She paws for her phone.

Here, she texts, stuffing one hand absently down her pocket as she stares through the gated fence.

From what she can see the house is very old style Japanese, grand in an easy open sort of way. There's nothing that gives appearance to anything unusual afoot but, then again, there never is.

Katsuki had been lucky in the way that his parents were the good kind.

Mitsuki had been loud and often volatile during their first years together, frustrated and struggling to make sense of the shell her son had turned into. But she had refused to let Katsuki tumble out of her hands and she'd simmered down, had met her half-way. Masaru had always been a gentle soul and together they had made something of the broken thing she'd become.

Her own parents had been... Katsuki doesn't think of them too often. They weren't the bad kind but they had never quite fit together in a way that made sense. They had supported her financially when they could and mailed her both birthday presents and Christmas gifts all the way up to her death. On the whole they had been *OK* to her but there'd always been a distance between them and she'd never found

the courage to confide in them when it was met with polite, if awkward, smiles and pats on her shoulders.

There's some irony in that Mitsuki and Masaru felt closer than her parents had ever been when she wasn't really their son.

Katsuki is half expecting Half-n-Half to make some dramatic entrance with a slow rattle of metal. But instead some two minutes passes by before she sees him jogging calmly out towards her across the grounds. He slows, giving a little jerk of his head to the right, and she slouches her way to the small door in the wall as he unlocks it and lets her through.

"I hope you have lunch prepared," Katsuki grumbles as he shuts it behind her. "Kaa-san insisted it was *impolite* to eat beforehand." Not to say that Mitsuki hadn't taken precautions and shoved both fruit and snacks down her backpack before leaving *just in case* but Katsuki figures that if she had to drag her way to his house it was only fair of him to at least feed her.

Half-n-Half hums. "Fuyumi can probably make something when she returns," he offers, his voice quiet, polite, his gaze clearly lingering on the bruises on her face before he looks away and beckons her along.

"Your sister?" Katsuki checks as she follows in a slouch, peering about in half-interest.

"Yes," he agrees.

Katsuki finds a pair of inside loafers offered to her as they step through the door and she raises an eyebrow but she's not a fucking *heathen* and she doesn't comment as she trades her slip-ons for them.

Half-n-Half puts on a pair of red ones and Katsuki decides that, if anything, at least he has some taste and she wiggles her toes inside the bright orange ones on her feet.

Brand new, she notes. She wonders why he'd taken the time and thought to arrange for them.

It's... curious, she decides.

And suspicious as fuck, she thinks with a slight narrowing of her eyes as she follows him down strangely empty corridors.

Half-n-Half's room is just as traditionally arranged as the rest of the

house with tatami floors, walls kinda pathetically bare and it makes her skin itch because he's *fifteen* and she's seen more personality in a fucking shed.

All the books are perfectly and neatly stacked on their shelves, there are no pictures, nothing incriminating or personal about.

No wonder he wears fucking tighty-whiteys, Katsuki thinks, squinting at a desk with pens arranged in a perfect little line beside a notebook without as much as a folded corner.

"You're probably wondering why I invited you over," Half-n-Half says as he seats himself on the edge of his bed, hands folding together, and it's kinda pathetically sad to watch because he looks both tense and serious, mismatched eyes in a far too mature face where the burn scar stands out vividly.

Katsuki gives his computer chair a tug and slumps into it with a small spin, unsurprised to find it made by rich expensive leather, the scent tickling at her nose.

"I'm just here for the free food and gossip," she drawls, throwing her feet up on his desk just to see the way his shoulders twitches, brow dipping momentarily.

But instead of complaining Half-n-Half leans forward and Katsuki very deliberately doesn't look at the turquoise of his burnt eye as he takes his time studying her.

"Will you allow me to be blunt, Bakugou?"

She blinks at him.

"Can I stop you?" she asks sarcastically before waving her hand as he opened his mouth. "Go for it. I came all the way here so it's fucking whatever."

Half-n-Half draws a breath and then exhales. "I find myself in a position of concern," Half-n-Half says, mouth thinning. "And I've decided that I can't just ignore it."

Katsuki stares at him.

Half-n-Half stares back.

"Okay?" she ventures, brow raising up. "What kind of concern?"

If this has anything to do with Deku I'm blowing his bookcase up, Katsuki promises herself as Half-n-Half searches for the best way to word whatever was on his mind.

"I first took notice of it during the Sports Festival," Half-n-Half says finally and Katsuki's brows furrow. "I find myself understanding your position of wanting a fair match. It was an... admirable thing to ask for," the boy says seriously. "I was... surprised, to see the way your words were met and it was *uncomfortable* to see the way the Heroes chose to deal with it."

It's phrased delicate, the hair on the back of Katsuki's neck rising as her lips pulled back with just a hint of teeth.

"Yaoyorozu-san and I were matched up against Aizawa-sensei during the final exam," he says, his voice staying level, eyes never veering from hers. "I don't know if you're aware of it but Yaoyorozu-san had some concerns and doubts on whether becoming a Hero is the right thing for her because she felt inadequate and unsure of her own choices. Aizawa-sensei pushed her to take initiative through the exam and we ultimately passed because of it. I've thought about it and I spoke with Midoriya at length and yet I cannot see a good reason for the way All Might acted during the Exam because there's no point to senseless violence."

For a long moment Katsuki simply stares at him, at this *fifteen-year-old* boy who had, apparently, taken it upon himself to invite her to his own home, arranging for a new pair of slippers and who was now pushing through the fact that they were very much *not friends* because he'd seen something that sat wrong with him.

"You think All Might acted out of line," she states, slowly drawing her feet off his desk and letting them drop down to the floor.

Half-n-Half inclines his head. "The Exams were two days ago and despite Recovery Girl your face is still bruised which means that there were far more devastating injuries her quirk dealt with first. You were also beaten to a state of unconsciousness, from what I understand it. You and Midoriya were the only ones who had to stop by Recovery Girl's office for more than a quick once-over and I find myself in a position of... concern."

Katsuki's mouth thins into a flat line.

Pro-Heroes were admired. They were at the top for a reason, ranked because idealization and admiration demanded it. What did it even

mean to be Number One? Number Two? What was the point of it if nothing more than to serve the public?

Unreachable, that was what the top Pro-Heroes were. Protected by their status and the public that adored them – ready to turn blind eyes and deaf ears if it meant keeping them there.

Even the Vigilante Stain, who had systematically ended the lives of several Heroes, had admired All Might. Katsuki had seen the uploads on Herotube, filmed in blurry, shaky clips of the man as he tilted his head with mania in his eyes and a too wide smile, blood smeared across his chin.

"Heroes? Don't make me laugh. This sham-filled society... and the criminals who wield their power in the name of petty mischief... are both targets of my purge. All for a better society."

But not All Might.

"COME! JUST TRY ME... YOU PHONIES! THE ONLY ONE ALLOWED TO KILL ME IS... ALL MIGHT, A TRUE HERO!!"

Never All Might.

Katsuki looks at a boy who is the son of the Number Two Hero and she finds herself not measuring up and she feels abruptly, and completely, fucking *shitty*.

*Because she'd seen the signs and done **nothing**.*

"Your father," Katsuki says, watching the way the other stiffens with an uncomfortable heaviness in her chest. "He hurts you, doesn't he?"

"That's not–"

"No," she interrupts, a scowl twisting her lips. "I'm not- for fucks sake." She blows out a hard breath, scrubbing at her hair, meeting the wary gaze of the other as she looks up. "Look. We're both, apparently, a bit fucked up, alright? I have my issues with All Might and you clearly have your issues with Endeavour. I'm *here* because you know that the number of a Hero doesn't mean *shit* because when it comes down to it they're fucking *human* and humans are petty and selfish and cruel by nature."

"... Not exactly how I would phrase it," Half-n-Half says after a moment and Katsuki snorts.

“I’m not wrong though, am I?” she challenges.

Half-n-Half gives her a thin-lipped, complicated look.

Katsuki is sixteen-thirty, that’s the truth of her existence, and she doesn’t want to get *involved* but she keeps getting pushed to be. Ashido, Shinsou, See Through and Round Cheeks-

And now fucking *Half-n-Half*.

She can’t just – *ignore it*. Not when he’d as much as admitted to it. He’s a *child* and she’s *not*.

They both startle, craning around when there comes a soft knock on the door before it carefully opened up and Katsuki finds herself staring at a painfully pretty woman in her early twenties, hair white with patches of red, her eyes soft grey and filling with visible surprise when she catches sight of Katsuki.

“Nee-san,” Half-n-Half greets, relaxing where he’d tensed up. “You’re home early.”

“I didn’t know you had company, Shouto.” Fuyumi, and Katsuki’s mind scrambles for a nickname but failing as the woman takes a measured step inside. “Hello, it’s nice to meet you. I’m Shouto’s older sister. You can call me Fuyumi, if you want.” Her smile is kind if a bit hesitant and there’s careful measuring look in her eyes.

“Bakugou Katsuki,” she offers, swallowing down the instinctive growl in her voice. “Katsuki is fine,” she tags on a bit gruffly.

The other blinks at her before her smile grows just a tad warmer and it softens her face. “Katsuki-kun, then.” And Katsuki can’t find herself to protest it because she realises, suddenly, that Half-n-Half isn’t the only one in the household, not the only child to have suffered, and it leaves her with an icy stretch of coldness inside of her.

-

“I don’t think Shouto has mentioned you before,” Fuyumi says a bit apologetically where she’s spreading ingredients out on the counter. “You are classmates, aren’t you?”

They’d migrated to the kitchen and Katsuki watches the young woman carefully as she opens plastic bags and packages, arranging everything neatly, a strange sort of tick that apparently didn’t belong to Half-n-

Half only.

“Yeah,” Katsuki agrees, aware of the protective way Half-n-Half is not quite *hovering* but remaining watchful and she struggles not to grimace in response. “We’re often paired up during Hero training since our quirks are a good match.”

Fuyumi turns to give her an inquiring look.

“I sweat nitroglycerin, sorta,” Katsuki finds herself saying with a bit of a shrug. “So – explosions.”

“Ah,” Fuyumi agrees thoughtfully. “I can see why then.”

Katsuki flexes her hands. “Do you- do you want some help?” she blurts out, uncomfortable with the entire situation.

Both Todorokis turn to her in surprise and Katsuki struggles not to scowl.

“I cook at home sometimes,” she grumbles.

Fuyumi gaze turns thoughtful and then warm and Katsuki struggles not to flush. “Of course,” the young woman says, shifting a bit to the side invitingly and Katsuki hauls herself up to her feet. “Why don’t you help me dice the vegetables while I start with the meat?”

Fuyumi is gentle, soft, everything Katsuki is not –skirt brushing at her legs and a pink sweater over a white blouse.

Katsuki struggles not to *stare*, knowing how uncomfortable it might be with what she was presenting as and instead glowers down at the carrots as she dices them neatly and efficiently.

“... I’ll set the table then,” Half-n-Half says behind them and, distantly, Katsuki hears Fuyumi thank him.

Katsuki shoves the carrots to the very edge of the board and start on the paprika and small chilies.

“I hope you don’t mind spicy food, Katsuki-kun,” Fuyumi says as Katsuki’s eyes are itching over the yellow onion, wiping her eyes discretely against the shoulder of her shirt. “If he could get away with it I suspect Shouto would live on nothing but soba.” There’s fondness in her voice and Katsuki wonders, a bit absently, what it might be like to have siblings.

She'd always been an only child, in this world and her first one.

"Spicy is fine," Katsuki grunts. "Soba, however, is disgusting."

Half-n-Half makes a vaguely offended noise. "No taste," he says with a twist of his mouth as Katsuki glances back at him.

"It's cold noodles," Katsuki says flatly. "In cold *broth*."

"You can eat it warm," Half-n-Half points out, one arm folded on the table where he sits with the chair drawn out to face them both. "Cold is better though."

His mouth twitches when her face scrunches up.

"What's your favourite food, Katsuki-kun?" Fuyumi inquiries as the smell of sizzling vegetables fills the room with a hiss of hot oil.

"Maybe we can make some next time you come for a visit."

Katsuki scratches at the back of her neck and carefully looks aside. "... You know those little sausages that looks like octopi? Those," she admits a bit grudgingly, a tinge of pink crawling up her cheeks as she glares down at the radishes that had been left over. "You doing anything with these?" she demands abruptly.

Fuyumi is smiling when she says she isn't and Katsuki grumbles, snatching the closest one up.

-

"You have a surprising side of skills," Half-n-Half says as he studies the five radishes cut carefully into the shape of flower buds.

Katsuki had ended up shaping bits of cucumber into leaves to accompany it and Fuyumi had looked delighted by it so Katsuki figures it's alright.

"s just vegetables," she grumbles as she takes the offered sleeve and adds a generous helping of stew to her plate. "Basic knife-work."

"I don't think I've seen it done with radishes before," Fuyumi muses, carefully plucking one of them and placing it on her plate with a small smile. "You can make roses with tomato peel, can't you?"

"Yeah," Katsuki agrees. "And cucumbers and stuff. If you're making fancy drinks you can use fruit to garnish them."

She hadn't made any in years but she likes the way Fuyumi smiles, all soft and warm, a strange little swoop in her belly.

"You – have more siblings, right?" Katsuki grasps for a change of subject and then immediately ends up regretting it because Fuyumi's smile falters and Half-n-Half stiffens in his seat.

For fucks sake, Katsuki thinks to herself as Fuyumi's eyes finally turns to her and Katsuki's chest twists up because there's shadows visible in them.

"We have another brother, Natsuo," the young woman answers.
"There... We used to have another one but..."

Are you living with a murderer? The question curls ugly in Katsuki's mouth but she cannot find it in herself to voice it but – maybe it's clear in her face anyway because Fuyumi's hands folds together carefully in her lap before opening her mouth to explain.

"Touya... had issues controlling his quirk," Fuyumi tells her as Half-n-Half clenches his jaw tight and looks away and-

Katsuki knows that name.

It hadn't been too long ago that Half-n-Half asked if she knew someone by it, the memory straining at the edge of her mind where she'd pushed it away after the odd encounter.

"He-" Fuyumi clears her throat. "It was... stronger than father's but he could never... control it. Touya burned alive in the house after he accidentally put it on fire."

Katsuki stares at her.

"I... see," she gets out, knuckles white where she's gripping her fork.

"It was years ago," Half-n-Half says gruffly. "There was no body."

-

Katsuki is three hours into her visit into the Todoroki mansion. In that time Half-n-Half has as much as confessed to Endeavour abusing him (them??) and there's apparently a dead child.

Katsuki decides that Fuyumi probably doesn't need to know she's never planning on stopping by ever again as she resolves not to bring up *any* mention of their mother as lunch awkwardly picks up.

She hasn't heard a single mention of there even *being one* despite the very clear evidence sitting in front of her.

This family is one dead member away from a fucking tragedy.

-

Katsuki stares at Half-n-Half and Half-n-Half stares back, hands in his pockets, shoulders straight and looking far more relaxed than he had when she arrived, and her mouth thins.

Katsuki thinks she'll be quite happy to never socialise again – she's fucking *exhausted*.

"There are dorms at U.A. where you can stay with permission," she tells him and his gaze turns appraising. "Aizawa chewed out All Might." She shrugs. "He'll listen."

"I'll keep that in mind," Half-n-Half says neutrally.

Katsuki grunts, turning around and pausing.

"... Tell Fuyumi-san the food was fucking delicious."

-

"- you're all going to summer training camp."

-

"Katsuki?"

There's chatter around her, excitement in the air, Aizawa's announcement having been met with loud cheers before he apparently gave up on keeping any sort of control of the class and left them to it.

Faintly, Katsuki can make out of the sight of him wrapped up in his yellow sleeping bag behind his desk.

"What?" she grunts, turning towards the other girl, only to pause.

There's a nervous sort of anticipation in Ashido's body-language, her hands clasped behind her back, eyes studying her intently, and Katsuki's brows furrows in confusion.

"You don't have to-" Ashido says carefully. "But- I'd really like that hug now if that's okay with you."

Behind the pink haired girl Kaminari jerks with a thud of his knee against the underside of his desk as he cranes around and there's more than one person copying him, Hagakure turning silent mid-word with Jirou as both girls turned to stare while Todoroki looks up with unreadable eyes.

Katsuki sees none of this – her mind is caught on the words as she spends a long moment simply staring.

Slowly, and a bit stiffly, Katsuki pushes her chair back with a scrape of the legs against the floor before straightening up to her full-height.

She feels *off* as she lifts her arms in a jerky sort of aborted motion – something that had once come so easily feeling entirely fucking foreign.

The realization sits a bit pathetic inside her chest.

It's just a fucking hu-

Ashido's arms slips silently beneath hers, *wrapping around her*, and Katsuki's mind quiets, muscles knotting up before her arms slowly lowered to rest stiffly against the other girl's back.

Feels the warmth of her, the press of her breasts against the flatness of her own chest, and the scent of something acidic stings at her nose as she draws a slow, measured breath before letting it out, forcing her muscles into something less tense.

“Thank you,” Ashido whispers into her ear, voice low and muffled.

I think I love you, Katsuki thinks but does not say as she stares a bit blankly at the wall across the classroom.

Chapter End Notes

Katsuki, after visiting the Todoroki household: *paranoia intensifies*

This turned... very Todoroki centric and longer than I anticipated but eh, I'm adaptable, and you're just going to have to deal.

I considered Katsuki giving Fuyumi a nickname but I decided that, ultimately, it wouldn't make sense for her to do so. Todoroki Fuyumi is twenty-three-years-old and in many ways she reminds Katsuki of what was and it's raw and too close to home.

Sometimes it be like that.

Ya'll know where we're at - I hope you're ready because I sure I am!

You are all amazing and I'm getting to your comments tomorrow but know that I treasure each and every one of them.

I hang about tumblr as artsy-death if you're about there and this has been chapter 15 of In The End.

I hope you enjoyed!

Scars

Chapter Notes

Sparky = Kaminari
Shitty Hair = Kirishima
See Through = Hagakure
Punk = Jirou
Round Cheeks = Uraraka
Class Rep = Iida
Duct Tape = Sero
Froggy = Asui
Ponytail = Yaoyorozu
Deku = Midoriya
Shiny = Aoyama

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Katsuki is questioning every decision that made *someone* think cramming twenty children onto a single bus for a camping trip in the middle of fucking *nowhere* was a good idea.

They're three hours into the trip and Katsuki already wants to go home and take a long nap, head throbbing despite the headphones firmly in place over her ears.

Shinsou and Aizawa, the absolute fucking *bastards*, are both asleep beside each other in front of her and Katsuki forces down the little spark that itches to go off at her finger tips as she scowls out the window at the passing trees.

Ashido elbows her lightly. "Cheer up," Katsuki reads on her lips as she turns around to glare at her instead. "Camping is supposed to be fun!"

"This isn't *fun*," Katsuki hisses as she tears her headphones off. "It's a fucking *nightmare*."

"Some socialisation won't kill you," Punk says behind her, clearly amused, and Katsuki twists around to bare her teeth at her.

"Hear, hear!" See Through agrees from her seat on the other side of the row near Ashido, feet swinging.

"I'm just happy to be here," Sparky says beside Punk with a dopey sort of smile, practically radiating relief.

Katsuki hates all of them.

-

“Sorry, kids.”

She thinks she might hate Aizawa, too, as the ground crumbles beneath them under the wild cheerful smile of the newly-introduced Pixie-Bob.

-

“This is kind of fun,” Ashido muses, kicking a bit absently at the charred, half-melting creature as Punk kneels down to pick up a piece of its jaw, earphone jacks curling forward to give it a poke that made it crumble to dirt.

“That’s not what you were saying ten minutes ago,” Shinsou drawls, visibly tense as he peered about for more creatures.

“We just need to get through the forest, right? Easy peasy!” See Through says with a clap of her hands, so close that Katsuki can feel her shoulder bump against her own. “Especially with *three* of the class’s heavy hitters to throw at anything that pops up.”

Katsuki looks at Half-n-Half and Half-n-Half looks back.

She twitches and turns away.

“Anyone know how to orientate?” Ashido asks, as she turns around expectantly to look at their small group, pushing the glasses of her Hero costume up. She was the only one to have anything of the sort on her, all of them still in their school uniform.

“Leave that to me,” Punk says, straightening up.

“My quirk doesn’t work on the beasts,” Shinsou drawls. “And Hagakure isn’t much use either.”

“At least I won’t be drawing any attention,” See Through says with a stretch of her hands above her head. “I could leave you all here to be bait while I breeze my way through.”

“So I’ll guide, Bakugou, Ashido and Todoroki are our offensive team,” Punk concludes, hand on her hip and with a small smirk. “If we work together we should be the first team back.”

Katsuki unbuttons her jacket and shrugs it off, tying it around her waist as she flexed her fingers.

Ashido's quirk had already melted the sleeves of her own and she doesn't hesitate to discard it aside on the ground, her palm leaving a sizzling print on the fabric.

Half-n-Half simply loosens his tie, a frosty breath leaving his mouth.

"Alright," Ashido breathes. "Let's do this, Bakusquad!"

Katsuki nearly trips.

-

"You are not calling it that-"

"Shinsou and I had a vote-"

"I don't fucking *care*. Also since when was fucking Half-n-Half included in this!?"

"Since you went and visited his house," Ashido admits as she twisted her arm out in a rain of acid over something that might, generously, be identified as a wolf. If wolves had eight paws and a jaw wide enough to swallow a car.

"You visited Todoroki's house!?" Hagakure squeaks as she rolls sideways to avoid a large detached paw rolling over the grounds after melting clean off.

"Bakugou helped my sister cook," Half-n-Half tells them, the rotten bastard, and Katsuki feels pink crawl across her cheeks as she twists around and blows up a giant cat-like creature as it burst through the trees, taking ugly satisfaction in its pained roar.

"Katsuki!" Ashido gasps theatrically. "You didn't tell me!"

"He made little flowers out of radishes." Half-n-Half shoots an ice spear high to cut off the screech of one that swoops over the tree tops in a dive and it collides hard against the ground before crumbling to dirt before their eyes. "And leaves out of cucumbers-"

"This way," Punk says as she takes a right.

"-Nee-san was very impressed," Half-n-Half concludes, barely looking winded despite the hard pace they'd been keeping.

Shinsou and Punk are the ones doing the worst out of them, See Through sticking close with a calm even paced breathing and Katsuki knows she must have been extending the original running time and distance on the schedule they'd worked out.

"And *her*?" Katsuki demands, throwing an accusing finger in Punk's direction.

"I have a name," Punk calls back, hoisting herself over a large fallen trunk. "You can think of me as a part-timer if makes you feel better."

"You have a cuddly little cute blue ferret on a shelf in your room and we girls talk," Ashido says with an apologetic little smile.

Katsuki's teeth snaps down on the inside of her cheek and she tastes blood.

"Ashido tried to vote for team Katsu-cute," Shinsou says with a pant as he catches up to her, looking ruffled and making a half-assed attempt to hide it.

Katsuki contemplates the moral issue of just leaving them all the fuck behind as she twitches.

-

"It'll only take three hours, yeah, right," Duct Tape wheezes, arm around his belly. "I'm so hungry I'm gonna *die*."

"That's how long it would have taken for us," Mandalay says as more and more of their classmates stumbles out of the forest, dirty and exhausted.

Mandalay is brown haired, the metallic cat-like ears on her head pink where-as Pixie Bob was blonde haired and seemed to favour blue. The broad man with a tiger like tail is silent, arms crossed, while Ragdoll, green haired and yellow clad, seemed to be off in her own world, humming to herself.

The Wild Wild Pussycats – Katsuki had heard about them. They were a search and rescue team, pretty famous, though she couldn't recall their quirks exactly. Pixie-Bob clearly had an earth-control quirk and she knew one of them had some sort of tracking quirk.

It was no wonder Aizawa had chosen to drag them out here – he could leave them stumbling blind in the forest and he wouldn't even need to

go looking for them on his own.

Katsuki is half-way through one of the bars Masaru had added to her packing before leaving, Ashido happily munching down a banana while Punk, See Through and Shinsou split a bag of chips between the three of them, sprawled out against the trunk of a large tree.

“Flaunting the power gap in our faces?” A boy Katsuki only knew enjoyed sugar says as he looks towards her, or rather the chocolate bar in her hand, and she raises an eyebrow as she flicks the last bit into her mouth, relishing in the pained little grimace it garners her as she bit down.

Pixie-Bob makes a strange *mew mew mew* noise that makes Katsuki crane towards her. “I actually thought it would take you longer,” she says with a flick of her tongue against her lips. “And you dealt with my earthly-beasts pretty easily, too.”

Ashido reaches down and Katsuki stares at her hand as fingers wiggled in her face and huffs as she grasps it, allowing the other to haul her up to her feet.

The other follows as well and Katsuki meets Pixie-Bob’s blue eyes. “Not bad,” the Pro-Hero says, gaze sliding from Katsuki to Ashido to Deku, Class Rep, Half-n-Half and then Froggy. “Especially you six.” Her grin turns knowing as she leans forward. “I’m guessing past experiences allowed you to act without hesitation.”

Katsuki snorts, looking away, pausing when she snagged on a fiercely glaring kid in a red cap with little horns and baring her teeth in response to a brief widening of his eyes.

“Katsuki-“ Ashido elbows her. “Don’t glare at the kid.” She sounds amused, craning past her to get a better look at the brat.

“I-I’ve been meaning to ask,” Deku’s voice comes hesitant. “But that boy – whose child is he?”

“Ah, he’s my nephew,” Mandalay admits, a white paw gesturing the brat forward. “Kouta! Come over and say hello – you’ll be spending the entire week together, after all.”

Deku takes a step towards the kid, crouching down with a smile and-

Katsuki mentally reevaluates brat to *favourite brat* as she watches the kid sucker-punch Deku clean between his legs as Ashido wheezed out

a surprised noise beside her.

“Right in the junk,” Punk says with some admiration as Deku tipped over, robbed of all colour as he clutched his hands between his legs.

“I can’t-“ the brat snaps, teeth gritting down, eyes dark, “abide jerks who wanna be Heroes.”

“Cute kid,” Katsuki says with a tip of her head and a grin.

“You’re a lot alike,” Half-n-Half says with a side-look.

“I’ll take that as a compliment,” Katsuki decides.

-

They’re all dirty from the forest and after a loud dinner they’re invited to use the hot spring and Katsuki’s mouth curls, watching her classmates thread happily down the corridor to the split between males and females.

“You should hurry up,” Mandalay says beside her and Katsuki slants her a look. “You’re getting up early tomorrow for training so it’s best not to linger.”

“... No thank you,” Katsuki says, turning on her heel, only to find herself snagged by her collar.

“Hey now,” Mandalay says and Katsuki jerks a bit in surprise as she was hauled back and then released before she had time to register the motion, a far too big white finger wagged in her face. “You can’t go to sleep all dirtied up.”

“I can,” Katsuki disagrees, stuffing her hands into her pockets with a scowl. “There was a lake some ten minutes away, anyway. I can just bathe *there*.”

Mandalay pursues her lips. “Sorry kid, but we’re responsible for you so you can’t just to wander off.”

Katsuki’s shoulders draws up tight under the Pro-Hero’s eyes

“Fucking *fine*!” she snarls.

-

Katsuki slams the door to the changing room open to a startled jump

from Sparky who clutches his shirt to his chest.

“Bakugou!” he exclaims.

“Fuck off,” Katsuki snaps, growling as she yanked at the buttons of her shirt, throwing it roughly onto the shelf beside Shinsou as the boy raised a brow at her, already down to a small towel wrapped around his hips.

“You’re in a good mood,” he drawls as Katsuki tugs her belt open, a buzzing in her ear and anger frothing through her veins, barely registering the chatter around her as she kicked her shoes off and shoved her pants down, kicking them roughly off.

Shinsou sighs as he bends down to snatch them up, folding them twice before dropping them onto the shelf as Katsuki’s fingers folded around the bottom hem of her undershirt.

“You know, it wouldn’t kill you to-“ Shinsou quiets abruptly, and around her the noise dies down, as Katsuki shoves her t-shirt onto the shelf, heart pounding in her chest and hating, hating, *hating*.

“Bakugou...” Shinsou sounds *wretched* and Katsuki jerks, stilling as his fingers brushed against the scar on her left side, their eyes meeting.
“What-“

“Nothing,” she snaps back, taking a step back from him. “It’s fucking *nothing*.”

“It’s really not,” Shitty Hair says in a low voice and Katsuki ignores him as she snatches one of the small white towels from the middle of the bench in the room and loops it around her hips before shoving her boxers down her legs.

She straightens out, meeting Half-n-Half’s unreadable gaze with a baring of her teeth.

-

Katsuki pretends not to feel the gazes of her classmates as she stares blankly up at the sky, Shinsou unusually quiet beside her.

The chatter had slowly picked up again but there’s a strange sort of tenseness in the air and her shoulders twitches, eyes dropping down to focus on Half-n-Half as he waded across the water, away from Deku and his friends, to claim a place at her side.

“They’ll stop eventually,” he says in a quiet undertone as he relaxed back and Katsuki very deliberately doesn’t look at the burn scars on his own chest, far from anywhere near as bad as hers but still *there*. Spots of shiny pink patches and small scars and scratches.

Katsuki wonders if Fuyumi has them, too. If Natsuo and the dead brother had suffered equally at the hands of their father.

“H-Hey Bakugou.” Sparky clears his throat. “We’ve – uh, we’ve got your back, you know?”

Katsuki turns her head to give him a flat look.

“Yeah!” Shitty Hair agrees, water splashing as he straightened up. “We’re class 1-A and we stick together! So if you need anything we’ll be right there, just say the word. We’ll beat up anyone who hurt you!”

Katsuki registers the sudden quietness from the girl’s side of the bath with something like resignation.

-

Dressed in loose sweats and a dark t-shirt, towel around her neck, Katsuki finds a hand clamping down around her wrist and yanking her inside the room beside the boy’s, mouth in a flat line when she meets Ashido’s worried gaze.

“Katsuki- why were they talking about beating someone up on your behalf? Are you still hurt from-“

“I’m not,” Katsuki says gruffly, a small anxious little twist in her belly. “Recovery Girl took care of the last before we left.”

Ashido’s eyes searches hers and Katsuki tries not to be bothered by the other girls who were arranging their things around their futons, giving them a hollow illusion of privacy.

“s old stuff,” Katsuki admits, fingers curling a bit unsurely around the hem of her shirt.

“Hey-“ Punk calls, a small furrow in her brow. “Do you want us to leave?”

Katsuki turns around to stare at her.

“Yeah, you know, if it’s private stuff,” See Through agrees.

“We can go check in on the boy’s room,” Round Cheeks suggests, smile relaxed.

Froggy croaks an agreement and Ponytail nods, eyes wide and worried.

Katsuki already knows that they’ll find out anyway – class 1-A is an unrepentant gathering of gossips and they’ll still look at her and they’ll wonder if it’s as bad as the others describes.

It’s not like... she’s *ashamed* of them. But she knows they’ll stare, they’ll wonder, they’ll question, they’ll *want to know*.

And Katsuki isn’t interested in explaining because she knows they won’t *understand*.

Katsuki first meets Dabi when she’s twenty-six and twelve, four years after waking up in the body of a dead boy. She feels disconnected from everything and the only thing she finds sense in is the violence that rises sharp and jarring through her to fill the stretch of apathetic emptiness.

She can’t resolve with the two adults who claim to love her and she can’t connect with the children who are supposed to be her peers. Her doctors poke and prod and gives her meds that leaves her nauseous and lethargic and even more out of sorts with herself instead of helping.

“*It helps you feel alive, doesn’t it?*” Dabi observes, head tilting and a small smirk as blood drips from her broken nose, knuckles bruised and torn, her body pulsing from the blossoming bruises. “*I bet I can do you one better.*”

Katsuki had been entranced by the blue flame that blossomed in his open palm and then she’d been *livid* because he laughs as he pins her down, pressing his palm sizzling hot against her hip after dragging her shirt up as she *howled*. Struggling, clawing, twisting to get out from beneath him as he slowly lifted his hand up to admire his handiwork.

But the weeks afterwards Katsuki finds her fingers seeking it out, touching, reassuring herself by this mark – this one thing that becomes undeniably *hers* in a world that had robbed her of everything.

It hadn’t stopped her from lashing out the next time he appeared, her own explosions leaving starburst patterns on his skin as he grinned

sharp and knowing, folding low before her world exploded in a beautiful stretch of blue.

And – maybe she’s just a bit tired of hiding. Of pretending to be something she’s not.

She can’t be a girl because she’s already stolen so much from his parents, she has to be Katsuki because it’s the body she wakes up in. She’s messed up, she’s dead and she’s not, and she loves Ashido, fiercely and undeniably as the girl folds her arms around her after All Might rattles the pieces inside of her.

There is so much she wants to tell Ashido but *can’t* but she can show her this, on her own terms, and she draws her shirt up and over her head before she can second-guess her decision, letting it dangle from her hand.

And she tries not to look as vulnerable as she feels as Ashido’s hand draws from where it’d risen to cover her mouth, a small tremble as she reaches forward to press her palm flat against Katsuki’s chest, fingers following the path of a gnarly stretch of purple skin.

Mina looks at her and Katsuki wonders what she sees in the stretch of scars that wraps around her in a soothing embrace of her own violent making.

-

Katsuki stares into the room – at the thirteen boys already crammed inside and swivels around just as a hand snaps out and Katsuki finds herself, for the second time that evening, yanked back and she snarls as she stumbles back, released, an arm looping around her neck.

“There you are,” Shinsou drawls near her ear and Katsuki’s fingers curls, muscles drawing tense. “I saved you a spot near the wall,” he says very, very quietly and Katsuki stills. “Todoroki and I claimed the places closest to you. He was surprisingly agreeable.”

Shinsou releases her and Katsuki forces the adrenaline to bleed out, slowly calming the beating of her heart as she meets his gaze as he slips his hands into his pockets with a little tilt of his head.

She swallows as she stares down at the futon neatly arranged, sides tucked in, not a crease to be seen on the pillow, and slants a look at Half-n-Half who had sprawled out on his own above hers, a history book held aloft in the air, lowering only to give her a brief flick of his

brow.

“Bakugou!” Sparky exclaims, bouncing towards them in sleeping pants with little lightning bolt on them and a Pikachu tail stylised on his t-shirt. “Where’d you disappear to, man?”

“None of your fucking business,” Katsuki grumbles.

“He was in the girl’s room,” a boy Katsuki had only distractedly categorized as *Shiny* because of his tendency to sparkle, loud and bright with a fucking *laser* shooting from his belly button.

“How unexciting,” Sparky moans. “I thought you were off raiding for alcohol or something.”

Katsuki tries not to linger on how fucking *enticing* it sounds after the absolutely exhausting day and instead flops down on her bed.

“Kaminari-“ Class Rep swivels around as Sparky’s smile falters. “There will be no-partaking in any kind of alcohol during this trip! And on top of that, you’re *underage*. I expect-“

“Yeah, yeah,” Sparky mumbles sulkily, waving a hand. “I’ll be responsible, yadda yadda.”

“You told Ashido?” Shinsou guesses in an undertone as he settles down beside her in a purple t-shirt with a cat flat on its belly with the words *not today* written below it.

Katsuki grunts and he hums.

“I wonder what Aizawa-sensei has prepared for us tomorrow,” Shinsou muses as he sprawls back.

Katsuki paws absently for her phone as it vibrates.

Pauses and stares at the message from a familiar, unsaved, number.

XXX-XXXXXX-XX: See you soon.

Chapter End Notes

Featuring: Dabi being a cryptic shit.

I hope you're ready because things are about to come crashing down.

Did I, willingly, wake up 7 am on my day off just to write this?
Yes. Yes I did.

I've also gone and decided that I'm a bit tired of Hirikoshi singling out four dudes so I've gone and added some girls up the rooster of those Pixie-Bob was impressed by. Asui had an interesting internship and she's top of the class for a reason and Ashido is turning out to be something of a heavy-hitter in this because it makes *sense*.

I will fight anyone who tells me differently.

The scars being revealed was a bit inevitable and Mandalay wasn't being cruel when she sent Katsuki off to the bath. They have some legit security concerns about and Aizawa is fast-pacing them through this training camp for a reason.

Your comments are absolutely amazing as always and I'm so very blessed by your support.

I'm artsy-death on tumblr if you're about there and this has been chapter 16 of In The End.

I hope you enjoyed!

Countdown

Chapter Notes

Half-n-Half = Todoroki

Feather Head = Tokoyami

Froggy = Asui

Round Cheeks = Uraraka

Deku = Midoriya

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

"Always be conscious of who you are. That's the key to improvement. That's why you're out here sweating. Why I'm riding you so hard. Keep it in mind, always."

Aizawa's words rings through Katsuki's mind as she shoves her hands down into the hot water, forcing her sweat glands to work overdrive as her skin prickles and burns before she yanks them up, explosions ringing loud above her as she grits her teeth.

Who am I?

A dead woman shoved into the body of a dead boy, an unnatural existence in an unnatural world of quirks. A world where every day civilians are armed with powers of extraordinary feats that she spends her first years absolutely violently afraid of.

Katsuki wakes up to too much noise after twenty-two years as a deaf woman living in a world where guns and knives are the weapons of the criminals on the late night news.

And suddenly there's *Villains* with their bodies frothing and warping, mania in their eyes, and she watches *Heroes* with too bright smiles basking in the media attention even as civilian lives tallies up.

She's afraid and then she becomes strong, tasting the bitterness and joy of violence equally because the world forces her to take a stance.

Katsuki dunks her arms back under into the boiling water and hisses harsh between her teeth as something that would have scalded her skin bright pink merely itches and froths because she's been made far more durable then she'd once been.

Who am I?

Sometimes Katsuki honestly isn't quite so sure.

She has no dreams, the dead boy's tastes bitter in her mouth and, in the end, she's been left bereft in a world not of her own choosing and she feels both empty and cheated.

-

Katsuki watches Aizawa drag away her four classmates with some amusement.

Mina shudders. "That could have been me," she whispers, mostly to herself, and Katsuki slants her a look. "Honestly, I just barely passed," she admits with a grimace. "If I hadn't been basically camping at your house..."

"But you did pass," Katsuki points out, hands in her pockets and peering about.

She'd only kept half an ear on the conversations around her, something about a *test of courage* which sounded more like an excuse for something relaxed and fun after a long day or training. She'd gone to plenty of haunted houses in her first life so the concept was pretty familiar, only instead of actors they were, apparently, supposed to scare each other.

"Alright Class 1-A!" Pixie-Bob says brightly as she holds out a rattling box. "Please draw your numbers and find your corresponding partners! Class 1-B will be the first to be offensive and Ragdoll have your numbers so please move your way towards her."

"Oooh, I hope we get paired up!" Ashido bounces her way forward, slipping through the throng of their classmates as Shinsou sidled up beside Katsuki.

"You look pretty relaxed," he notes as she tilts her head towards him. "Not scared of the dark?"

"I'll blow up anything that as much as touches me," Katsuki says with a little curling of her fingers.

"... If we get paired up I'm trading partner," Shinsou says flatly.

Katsuki ends up with the number two, Half-n-Half stepping quietly up beside her with a flash of the same number. Ashido and Shinsou trades look upon realizing they'd both drawn a five and Katsuki spies

Round Cheeks a bit pink cheeked beside Froggy, arms already linked together.

Half-n-Half notices her looking and she catches his arm moving from the corner of her vision.

“Try it,” she warns him mildly. “And I’m blowing your fucking arm off.”

-

“EVERYONE.” Shouta’s head jerks up, catching the undertone of panic in Mandalay’s voice through her quirk. *“We’re under attack by two Villains! And there might be more out there! All those who can get back to camp should if they can. If you encounter an enemy, don’t engage! Just retreat!”*

This, Shouta thinks as mind catches up to the message. Was exactly what we were trying to avoid by not bringing All Might here.

“Vlad! I’m leaving these guys with you.” He slams the door open, hand grasping for his capture weapon. “I’m heading out to protect the students.”

“How did our location get leaked!?” Kaminari exclaims behind him.

I’d rather not imagine, Shouta thinks grimly as he steps out, head turning up to stare at the large thick cloud of dark smoke, fire spreading wide in the distance.

“This is bad...” They had some thirty-five students, plus a kid, only six Pro-Heroes and an unknown number of Villains.

No matter how he twisted and turned the situation it was nothing short of grim.

“Always worrying about others, huh, *Eraserhead?*”

Blue flames explodes out violent and wide and so hot that Shouta feels the skin of his arm sizzle where he’d thrown it up in defensive over his face, capture weapon leaving him clinging to the roof of the house to avoid them.

“You Pro-Heroes... just stay out of our way.” The voice is rough, low, and Shouta watches as the flames dies down, revealing a young man with dark hair and stretches of purple burn scars, staples buried into

his skin to keep the ruined scar tissue clinging in place, arm still outstretched. “You’re not the one we’re here for, after all.”

Something uneasy slides through Shouta as the Villain tilts his head up, mouth stretching as he catches sight of him. “Well, I guess that’s a Pro for ya.”

“Who are you here for then?” Shouta demands as he shifts, keeping a careful eye on the other.

The Villain hums. “Just a friend,” he admits, fingers flexing a bit absently in a tic that only adds to nagging suspicions at the back of Shouta’s head.

He clenches his teeth.

-

“That has to be one of the most fucked up quirks I’ve ever seen.” Katsuki stares at the man gurgling unintelligible words through a mouth with *far* too many strangely shaped teeth. “What the ever loving *fu*-“

“Bakugou!” Half-n-Half says with some exasperation, hands curled around the legs of the passed out 1-B student they’d found along the way. “Please focus.”

Katsuki bares her teeth. “I *am*,” she snaps, keeping a wary eye on the... man. Thing. “Who’s ahead anyway?”

“Shoji and Tokoyami,” Half-n-Half says, surprisingly calm considering the situation. “We need to find the others and re-group. There’s no telling what kind of Villains are out there or what they want.”

Katsuki gives Half-n-half a flat look, one arm gesturing towards the clearly unhinged quirk user on the ground, wrapped up in some kind of black leathery straight-jacket, a wide gaping mouth with lips pinned back.

He’s struggling against the ice Half-n-Half and caught him in but it was already cracking dangerously and with how versatile and quick the... teeth... were Half-n-Half couldn’t risk putting the student on his back down.

“Fucking hell,” Katsuki huffs, taking a step forward. “My fucking teeth are aching just *looking* at him.”

“We can put off any big fires,” Half-n-Half reminds her. “It could spread and kill everyone.”

“Cheerful of you.” Katsuki reaches down to her boot, drawing the knife Toga had gifted to her and giving it a spin, grasping it with the blade facing down along her arm. “I guess we’ll have to do this the traditional way then.”

She bares her teeth in an anticipatory grin as the ice shatters.

-

“Your positions, number and objective – spill it,” Shouta demands, pushing the Villain’s face harder into the ground, eyes dry and itching, heart pounding in his chest with every ticking second he wasn’t with his students while the man laughs below him.

“I already told you, didn’t I?” the Villain turns his head, turquoise eyes glittering. “We’re picking up an old *friend*.”

“Don’t play games!” Shouta twists the Villain’s arm, his body jerking with a grunt as the arm tore from its socket. “Your right arm is next so let’s do this rationally. If I get as far as your legs it’ll be a hassle for the arresting officials.”

“What’s gotten under your skin, *Eraser*?” the Villain drawls and Shouta clamps his hand rough around the scar tissue on the other’s wrist only to jerk, tensing and turning to look up as an enormous explosion went off in the forest.

“Sensei!” Several of his students bursts through the trees and Shouta is both relieved and cursing the timing of it as the Villain twists below him and Shouta throws himself back to avoid the blue flames that licks up as he’s forced to blink before activating his quirk again.

He shifts to take a protective stance in front of his wide-eyed students as the man slowly drew up to his feet with a short laugh.

“Quite worthy of being an instructor of U.A.” The Villain says as Shouta’s hand curls around his capture weapon still wrapped around the other, a far too knowing look in his eyes as Shouta snapped it tight.

“Is it cuz your students are so precious?”

Shouta’s eyes widens as dark goo splatters onto the ground instead of

blood, body torn in two but freezing strangely before slowly starting to crumble. "I hope you have what it takes to protect them." The Villain bares his teeth in a grin that slowly disintegrates. "See ya later, *Eraser*."

The last bits slips down before melting into a pool of black on the ground.

-

"What kind of jerk comes swinging with a knife like that," Tsuyu demands, hand thrown out and planted firmly in front of Ochako as she cradles the bleeding wound on her arm.

I didn't even see her move, Ochako thinks warily as the girl hums, knife lifted high above her head as she studied the blood sliding down the edge of it.

Yellow eyes flicks down towards them. "I'm *Toga*." If it wasn't for the contraption on her face she would have looked like any normal high-school girl, a short pleated skirt ruffling at her thighs, an oversized yellow cardigan with green pouches strapped in place.

"You two are really cute!" On her back are two tanks and Ochako keeps a careful eye on them as a hand reaches back, drawing out a thick metallic syringe. "Asui... Uraraka..." The eyes of the Villain glitters, mania deep in her eyes. "But not as cute as *Baku-chan*, of course."

Baku-

"You- you don't mean Bakugou, do you?" Ochako takes a step forward, wary of the familiar address. "How do you know-"

"Ah." Toga lifts a hand up to her covered mouth, eyes wide with false innocent. "I wasn't supposed to say." She leans forward. "I guess I have no choice but to kill you then." Ochako jerks at the casual proclamation, yellow eyes tracking her almost curiously.

Toga tilts her head, eyes sliding down to the blood dripping from Ochako's fingers. "I've known Baku-chan for years." She sighs dreamily, fingers folding around the edge of her mask, pulling it down. "I miss the way he bleeds." The Villain's tongue flattens and curls and over her fingers, eyes sliding shut. "I miss the way he *taste*."

-

“Midoriya-“

“It’s really bad,” Midoriya gets out, arms blown to bits and hanging limp at his sides, Kouta clinging a bit wide-eyed but unhurt to his back, arms wrapped tight around his neck. “They’re – sensei, they’re after Kacchan-“

Shouta only just resists sliding his eyes shut.

Of course it’s him, he thinks just a tad bitterly. If it isn’t Problem Child one it’s Problem Child two.

But it also puts another new dangerous spin on the situation. The flame Villain claimed he was looking for a *friend* and Shouta had seen the burn scars that wrapped tight around his student’s chest, nearly identical to the Villain’s own.

Just what have you gotten yourself involved in, Bakugou?

“There’s so much I have to tell you but I need to tell Mandalay and we need to protect him-“

“Those wounds,” Shouta says heavily. “You’ve gone and done it again-“

“I know,” Midoriya interrupts. “But sensei, I already failed Kacchan once and I cannot allow it to happen again!” Green eyes meets his alight with determination, a weak little smile slanting on his mouth when he catches Shouta’s flat look. “Class 1-A sticks together, right?”

You look like hell, Shouta thinks but does not say. You have absolutely no business going back out there-

“Mandalay,” Shouta says as Midoriya knelt down to carefully let Kouta slide off. “Tell her this.”

-

“Ochako-chan,” Tsuyu warns. “Just because Aizawa-sensei told us we can protect ourselves doesn’t mean we should chose to engage.”

“I know, Tsu,” Ochako reassures her, eyes never leaving the Villain. “But if they came here for Bakugou...”

Toga bends low, a syringe in either hand as she grins, hunger glittering in her eyes.

-

Katsuki's knife slides deep into the flesh of the Villain's arm, snapping her hand out to go low in a carefully controlled explosion to avoid the teeth that zig-zags through the air, straining from the gaping jaw of the Villain as he howls.

"Do you have any idea-" Ice shoots out, teeth shattering against it. "Of why there's a group of Villains going after you?"

Katsuki very, very deliberately doesn't think about the message from Dabi as she side-steps with a twirl to shatter more teeth, backing to fall near Half-n-Half as more and more ice spreads protectively around them.

"Hell if I know," she snarls as the Villain goes high into the air, balanced on his teeth like some kind of twisted up spider, legs dangling limp below him.

"Give me... flesh..." the Villain wheezes. "FleeEsh..."

"Any bright ideas?" Katsuki huffs, sliding her knife back into her boot as she flexed her fingers.

"- there, I see ice! They must be fighting-"

Both Katsuki and Half-n-Half turns around.

"Bakugou, Todoroki- please, one of you-" Katsuki stares at the enormous shadowy bird, Feather Head wild eyed in its grasp as it rises to swallow everything in its path with a desperate echoing cry. "Give us some light!"

-

Katsuki's mouth thins, head turning as something caught at the edge of her vision, a small flicker of blue in the depth of the dark forest before getting snuffed out.

"- Bakugou? They're after him?" Feather Head's voice registers distantly.

Another flicker of blue, further away, and Katsuki takes a single quiet step back, away from Deku and whatever feverish desperation had driven him in a hunt for her. Away from Half-n-Half who had shown her genuine concern-

And then the next thing Katsuki knows she's going down, her breath torn from her chest as her back hit the ground *hard*, hands clamping down on her shoulders, knees pinning her arms flat.

Golden eyes in a sclera of black fills her vision and Katsuki stares up at her friend.

"*You.*" Mina's voice trembles. "What the *hell* do you think you're doing!?" she demands, furious.

Shinsou steps out of the bushes, Round Cheeks and Froggy at his heels, and Katsuki finds herself with a sudden quietness spreading around them.

"Ashido?" Deku's voice reaches them, unsure and tired where he lies slumped on the shoulders of a boy Katsuki only distantly recognises.

Mina's fingers digs into her shoulders. "He was planning on leaving," Mina says, her voice cold and it twists something inside of Katsuki, something helpless and furious at the same time because *Dabi* was practically at her fingertips and Mina was-

"The Villain we went up against knew you," Round Cheeks says carefully and Katsuki slowly shifts her gaze towards her. "Blonde hair, a strange obsession with blood...?" She raises a brow.

"Toga is here?" Katsuki jolts slightly.

"So you do know her." Round Cheeks pursues her lips. "And you're familiar enough with her to call her by name."

Katsuki tenses, teeth clenching down.

"We cannot allow ourselves to linger," Feather Head says, voice low and dark where he's watching everything with hawkish eyes.

"What exactly is going on here, Bakugou?" Half-n-Half asks as he steps to peer down at her. "You claimed you didn't know *why* the Villains might be here for you but that's not the complete truth, is it?"

And-

"I don't *know*," Katsuki snarls as she jerks only to have Mina press her down harder and something ugly claws inside of her, something wretched and *desperate*. "This isn't *right*- this isn't how it's supposed to be!"

Dabi and Toga weren't supposed to be *Villains*.

Her classmates weren't supposed to be trying to **keep her away from them**.

Katsuki's fingers sink into the earth and she twists, her foot colliding with Mina's ribs to shove her away as she scrambles to her feet.

Shinsou reaches out to catch Mina as she stumbles back, eyes wide and surprised.

But Katsuki hardly notices it, fingers sinking into her hair, clenching down as she snarls, her heart pounding too hard, too loud, her skin crawling and something wrathful and violent fills her chest as she scrambles for *sense*.

"Kacchan..."

Katsuki's teeth snap together and she swivels around with a snarl. "Would it fucking *kill you* to respect my fucking wishes and not call me that!?" she demands harshly. "Your Kacchan is fucking *gone*. I am not *he*. I'll never be him!"

Deku stares at her, eyes green, so fucking *green*, mouth opening-

But Shinsou places a hand on his shoulder, quieting him. "You are not helping right now, Midoriya," he says mildly and Deku hunkers down, nodding, eyes hard to read as he rested against the shoulder of the boy that Katsuki can't remember the fucking name of.

"What can you tell us about them?" Round Cheeks asks and Katsuki looks to her, eyes dark. "The girl – she was good with knives but there's someone else out there, isn't there?"

Katsuki's mouth thins.

"None of your fucking *business*," she growls.

"Bakugou-chan." Katsuki jolts slightly at the address, turning towards Froggy. "Do you think this person will come after you?"

See you soon.

"Yes," she grits out.

"Then wouldn't it be pertinent if you told us what to expect from them?" Froggy continues, voice smooth, low, fucking *rational*.

“Especially if you have some sort of personal relationship with them, *nero*.”

No, Katsuki thinks immediately because she owes Dabi her fucking *sanity*.

But Katsuki is never given a chance to answer because suddenly everything is violently and beautifully *blue*.

The flames explode past her on either side of her body, licking hot, the sweat on her palms crackling and popping from the sheer intensive heat as her classmates are forced back and away from her.

Katsuki's breath catches at the sheer destruction left behind it, ash floating lazily through the air.

“Thinking of selling me out?” A voice brushes soft against her ear and Katsuki's mind comes to a stumbling halt as an arm loops almost gently around her, drawing her back against a familiar lithe chest and she inhales, sulphur filling up her lungs, ash mixing with the taste of iron on her tongue.

“*Never*,” Katsuki growls.

Dabi's mouth stretches as his other arm wraps around her, his chin coming down to rest on top of her head as he folds her up in his embrace.

“Good,” he murmurs. “I'd hate for this to become a *tragedy*.”

Chapter End Notes

In where Aizawa isn't the only one concerned, nothing is going to plan (for Katsuki) and things are about to come to an explosive resolution because nothing is simple and everything hurts.

I rewrote this seven times and I have far too many pages of words that were just - ultimately dismissed because I couldn't get the damn tone right but we're *here*. And just in time because I need to be in bed in like 30 minutes or work is going to be vaguely hellish tomorrow.

On a side-note: I got a question on whether whether Katsuki loves Mina platonically or romantically and just to clarify - there's no romance involved. Katsuki largely views her peers as children and she could not, in good moral consciousness, ever think of them in

such a way since she's twice their age. Not to say she's a the patron saint of morality but such it is.

She... lives a complicated existence.

Absolutely blown away by your responses as always and I'll try to catch up to them after work tomorrow! I wanted to get this up today if I could since Sunday feels like a lifetime away.

I hang about tumblr as artsy-death and this has been chapter 17 of In The End.

I hope you enjoyed!

Choices

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Dabi is warm – a side-effect of his quirk, Katsuki suspects. She wonders about the chemistry of it as she draws one breath after the other, chest rising and falling, her mind strangely calm.

“You have a lot to explain,” Katsuki tells him tersely because she’s still so undeniably *angry*.

Dabi had been ignoring her for *weeks*. And what had the idiot done? Gone and becoming a fucking *Villain* because that was apparently *rational* and she wants nothing more than to turn around and let him know just how fucking *not okay* she is with that.

But the other half of her is busy soaking in his presence, her body loose in his arms, because it’s *Dabi*. And she’d missed him more than she’d wanted to admit to, more rattled than she’d thought herself to be as tension she hadn’t even been aware of bleeds out at the scent of him, at the reassurance and stability she’s come to associate with him.

I’m messed-up, Katsuki acknowledges to herself as his coat brushing against the back of her fingers in the rustle of a breeze.

His chest rumbles in a low chuckle. “All in due time, Baku-chan,” he assures her.

“Before or after you try to kidnap me?” Katsuki asks dryly. “Because I’m not fucking stupid, you know, and I’m not terribly interested in whatever the fuck the *League of Villains* want with me. For one, it’s an absolutely horrible name. No finesse. And two, I’m just not *interested*.”

Dabi’s arms draws her tighter, his head angling down, lips brushing against the shell of her ear. “Don’t you think this charade has gone far enough?” he murmurs, so quiet that she has to strain to catch the words. “We both know you’re nothing like *them*.”

Katsuki shifts, angling up to put them face to face.

His turquoise eyes are just as beautiful as she remembers them and she thinks of evidence and conversations, about the mismatched eyes in Half-n-Half’s face and the tale of a boy who burned alive in the

home of the Number Two Hero.

"You're not a fucking Villain, Dabi," she growls quietly. "And neither am I."

"No," he agrees. "You are something entirely of your own making," he acknowledges as she furrows her brow. "Do you trust me?" he asks her.

"Right now?" Katsuki hisses, catching movement at the corner of her eye and tensing ever so slightly.

"Do you trust the Heroes?" he murmurs, his eyes glittering knowingly.

Katsuki bares her teeth.

Dabi's grin flashes sharp, straightening up and shifting to grasp at the collar of her shirt as she tensed, stumbling a bit in surprise when he gave her a little jerk to the side just as something burst through the bushes. "About time, wackjob--"

Katsuki's eyes widens as Toga sprung up, arms outstretched to wrap around her neck, knees clenching down on either side of her waist.

If it wasn't for Dabi she would have gone right down as she grunts, knees bending before she catches herself with a steadying jerk of her jacket, an arm looping a bit awkwardly around the body clinging to her as she registers the familiar presence.

"Baku-chan!" Toga's grip tightens, iron and something softer filling up her nose as Katsuki breathes in. "I missed you," Toga whispers into her ear before her legs shifts, heels burying into Katsuki's back as she pushes back to peer down at her. "Look at you," Toga breathes. "I saw the footage, you know?" A calloused palm presses against her skin, framing her cheek. "Only *Dabi* should make you bleed like that, Baku-chan." Her yellow eyes darkens. "It wasn't nearly as fun watching All Might just--"

"Wackjob," Dabi warns mildly. "We have an audience."

Toga wraps her arms back around Katsuki's neck to peer at him. "But it's *Baku-chan*," Toga pouts as she rests her chin on her shoulder.

-

This, Hitoshi acknowledges to himself, is not good.

He keeps one hand wrapped around Ashido's tense wrist, eyes darting from the tall scarred Villain to the girl currently clinging to a faintly exasperated Bakugou who, despite his issues with touch, keeps one hand loose on the Villain's hip as she argued with the older, his body-language steady and strangely relaxed.

Hitoshi doesn't think he's ever seen the other boy so *calm* as when the man wrapped him up in his embrace and it's setting off all sorts of warning bells at the back of his mind as he glances to Todoroki whose gaze is locked on the man with a strange sort of focus.

Midoriya looks like he's seen a ghost, pale, his breathing still harsh and struggling on Shouji's back, and he really shouldn't be here, Shinsou thinks. With how well he's managed to backfire his quirk he risks being a liability they cannot afford.

Hitoshi doesn't like the Villain's lidded look as turquoise eyes shift in their direction.

-

"I believe your friends are getting impatient, Baku-chan," Dabi says with a stretch of his lips. "And we really can't afford to linger."

"Fuck off," Katsuki grumbles, pushing Toga off to a small pout as she reluctantly slid off. "I already told you--"

"Katsuki." Mina's voice makes her twist around, meeting golden eyes, and registers with a bit of a jolt that Mina looks tense and wary. "Come here."

"Katsuki?" Toga echoes and Katsuki slants her a look as arms curls around her right one. "How come she gets to call you by your first name and I don't?" Toga demands. "We found you *first*."

"Who are you?" Half-n-Half is still staring at Dabi who tips his head slightly, turquoise eyes turning to regard him almost curiously. "And what do you want with Bakugou?"

"Todoroki Shouto..." Dabi muses, mouth stretching. "The prodigious son of *Endeavour*. It's quite the company you've taken to keeping, Baku-chan." His eyes drifts to Deku. "Even All Might's little protégé is here." He slips his hands into the pocket of his pants. "We are here because the League of Villains have decided that this one here would make an excellent addition to our ranks."

“And I told you I’m not *interested*, Dabi,” Katsuki snarls in response, taking a step back with a rough tug out of Toga’s grip.

Dabi lets out a gusty sigh and Katsuki stills at the look in his eyes when he turns to her. “Tell me something, *Katsuki*. What do you think the Heroes will do once they find out you’re willingly associated with not one but *two* Villains?” Katsuki stills. “Do you think they’ll offer you understanding? A pat on the shoulder and send you right up the tracks to become one of them?”

“That’s not-“ Katsuki grasps for words but her mouth feels strangely dry and something cold is settling heavy in her gut.

“Aizawa-sensei wouldn’t allow them to do anything!” Shinsou says sharply but Katsuki only has eyes for Dabi who meets her gaze equally intense.

“Eraserhead is but one Underground Hero,” Dabi says ruthlessly. “In the end it’s those with fame and the backing of the public that lays down the law.” He leans forward and those strangely beautiful eyes of his swallows up her sight. “What do you think All Might is going to do, Baku-chan? He’s chained you up once, he’s brutally assaulted you without hesitation and a single word from him will pluck your dream right out of your grasping hands.”

“All Might wouldn’t do that!” Deku gasps, pressing up desperately. “He’s not-“

“He’s not what?” Dabi drawls, not bothering to look at him. “The world praises and revers the Heroes in this rotten society but the truth is never quite so simple or true, you’re just happy to ignore it as long as it means you have someone to look up to and adore. No matter the price.”

It’s jarring, Katsuki thinks as she looks at him, to hear her own thoughts aloud.

“You and I are the same,” Dabi tells her and her hand presses against that first scar on her hip and his eyes dips, knowing and – she hesitates to call it *soft* but there’s something there in the depth of his gaze that makes her want to reach out and touch her fingers against his scarred jaw. “You know we are. It’s why you keep coming back, it’s why I keep seeking you out. Kin drawing kin.”

“Don’t listen to him!” Mina’s voice rings with a hollow note of desperation, taking one step forward only to halt when Toga shifts,

gaze sharp and the edge of a knife glinting in the palm of her hand as she pinned her in place with a warning tilt of her mouth. "Maybe it's true that everything isn't perfect but it doesn't have to stay that way. We can change it!"

"Can you?" Dabi asks, voice liquid soft. "As far as I can see it the world is caught stagnant. All Might has chosen his successor and the boy is threading in his footsteps with feverish adoration. One Hero will fall and another will rise. The system *never changes*. Becoming a part of it will solve *nothing*."

Katsuki takes a halting step towards him.

"Katsuki-" Mina's mouth wraps around her name and Katsuki thinks of moments caught together, late night studying and camaraderie during lunch, the blinking screen and the letters *Are you OK?*

Thinks of arms that wraps around her as if Mina could keep all the pieces of her together.

But she also thinks of a softness she doesn't trust and eyes that lacks understanding when a trembling palm presses against the scars on her chest.

"Please-" Mina gasps, jerking at her wrist caught in the grasp of Shinsou's hand. "I know you think you're alone but there are far more people who care about you than you think! I've met your parents - Mitsuki-san and Masaru-san would lay down the world for you!"

Katsuki stills, heart beating loudly inside her chest because-

They're not her parents, not really. They're *his* and Katsuki resigns herself to a lot of things in this world, her identity and gender and very personality sacrificed to play pretend as someone she's not and she lives for a dead boy whose dream taste like bitterness and regret.

"You're my *best friend!*" Mina cries as she yanks out of Shinsou's grasp. "Damn it, Katsuki, I-"

But Katsuki never hears what she's about to say because Dabi wraps a hand around her wrist and yanks her stumbling into his chest, arm looping around her, and a knife thuds into the ground, forcing Mina into a tripping stumble, her knees hitting the ground.

Katsuki meets Mina's wide-eyed gaze as fog stretches wide and yawning black to swallow them up.

-

Mina stares at the burnt grass, something terrible in her chest as the sudden silence stretches around them.

“He’s... He’s gone,” Mina manages numbly, eyes locked on the spot her friend had just been, half-expecting the fog to expound back, for Katsuki to appear back at her side out of sheer *stubbornness*.

But there’s no Katsuki – just ash and dust after the Villain’s quirk had ravaged the ground.

Dabi, Katsuki had called him, the name leaving his mouth easy and familiar.

“We need to find Aizawa-sensei,” Shinsou says heavily, pale, the bags beneath his eyes dark when Mina jerks towards him. “We need to let him know Bakugou has been kidnapped-“

“Was he thought?” Tokoyami says quietly as he melts from the darkness of the forest, beak curled in a grim frown, Dark Shadow peering wide-eyed from his shoulder, still small after the blue flames of the Villain.

“He never made the decision!” Mina rounds at him. “He never got to make the choice! You don’t – you don’t get to *say that*.”

“I’m not saying we shouldn’t help him,” Tokoyami denies, one hand rising up. “But lying to the Pro-Heroes or deliberately withholding information can risk their lives, too, and they need to understand just what kind of state Bakugou-san was in if they’ll want any chance of getting him back.”

“Tokoyami is right,” Todoroki says, a strange look in his eyes, lips pursued. “I do not believe that *Dabi* sought to hurt Bakugou – if anything he was strangely insistent on convincing him to come along when he could just have easily just taken him.”

“I agree,” Asui says with a nod. “They both seemed to care for him in some way but Dabi was definitely the more vocal of them. I believe that Toga would simply have taken him from the beginning had he not been there.”

Uraraka shakes her head. “This is all very strange,” she says, air ruffling her fringe as she blew out in a sigh.

Strange.

A tremble runs through Mina and something terrible curls in the depth of her chest, anger vicious and clawing as she squeezes her eyes shut, recalling the fear in her friend's crimson gaze at the mention of *Heroes*.

At the mention of **All Might**.

-

"The whole Villain Revival... we took it too lightly," Midnight says grimly, glasses pushed up into the jagged spikes of her hair. "They've already begun their war to destroy our Hero society. Even if we'd taken it more seriously could we have prevented this relentless flurry of attacks? Most organized crime has been erased since the rise of All Might so all that's left is the best of the worst."

"Basically we got complacent in this peaceful area." Present Mic's fingers drums against the table. "Otherwise there'd be no need for *preparations* when we realized what was happening."

"I'm just mad about how useless I was." All Might, in his true form, clothes hanging on his skinny frame, digs his fingers into his hair. "I was relaxing in the bath while they were out there fighting for their *lives*."

"I reckon we can't pretend to be undaunted any longer." Snipe leans forward, one arm on the large round table they're gathered at. "Lettin' a student get wrangled is one serious failure for U.A.," he says heavily. "And it wasn't just Bakugou those varmint took. They stole away the public's trust in us Heroes."

"And the media is having a field day censuring U.A." Nedzu holds up a newspaper. "We can assume they targeted him because of that crazed violent image of him at the Sports Festival was widely disseminated. If they are actually able to win him over then this educational institute is over."

There's a moment of silence, each Hero lost in their own thoughts.

"What about the report from the students?" Present Mic broaches finally. "They told us that that Bakugou knew two of the Villains by name."

"Dabi and Toga, yes," Nedzu agrees, paws pressing together. "They

did agree on that he seemed surprised to see them there and showed signs of visible distress upon realizing they were part of the Villain force sent to kidnap him. I'm inclined to believe the situation is a bit more delicate than first appearance might give hint to."

"That's putting it lightly," Present Mic says with a tired slump, exchanging a long complicated look with Midnight.

-

Mina grasps at the strap of her backpack hanging uselessly from her fingers at her side as she stares at the door.

She doesn't know why she's there but going home – it felt like giving up. Out of the forty students at the training camp some fifteen were in critical condition and one of them were missing.

Her friend is missing.

Mina presses down against the doorbell, jerking a bit in surprise when it opened wide almost immediately.

Mitsuki stares down at her, clothes rumpled, a furious look in her eyes that melts into surprise at the sight of her.

"Mina-chan?"

Katsuki really looks like his mother, Mina thinks as she blinks against the sudden burn in her eyes.

"I'm- I'm sorry," Mina gasps, bowing low, arms wrapping tight around her chest. "I tried to stop him but it wasn't *enough*. And I – I should have done more and now Katsuki is gone and I don't-" She squeezes her eyes shut, feels the tears sliding down her cheeks even as she struggles against them. "I don't know what to *do*."

There's a moment of silence and then a hand is gently settling on her arm, drawing her up from her bow and into warm arms and Mina's breath stutters before she melts into the embrace, fingers curling into the back of the woman's sweater as she presses desperately closer.

"It wasn't your fault," Mitsuki tells her, voice rough, and it feels like a *lie*.

-

Mina is curled up on the Bakugous' couch, nursing a cup of hot

chocolate with a blanket draped over her lap when the doorbell rings. She peers up, watching Masaru drag a tired hand through his hair, smoothing out some crinkles in his shirt before opening it up.

“Aizawa-sensei?” Mina blurts out in surprise, nearly spilling hot chocolate over her fingers as she jerked up.

“Ashido,” he says heavily. “I suppose I shouldn’t be surprised to find you here.”

“Mina is always welcome in our home,” Mitsuki says a bit tersely. “I cannot say the same for *you*.”

Aizawa-sensei, if possible, looks even more tired than usual, the bags heavy beneath his eyes. He’s all dressed up, his normally wild scraggly hair drawn back, the white button-up beneath his jacket ironed out, and his back is straight and his eyes serious when he looks to Katsuki’s mom.

And to Mina’s absolute shock he bows low.

She stiffens in her seat, fingers clenching around the cup and looks away instinctively because it’s *wrong* and she doesn’t like it.

It wasn’t Aizawa’s fault – Mina knew Katsuki liked him, as much as the grouchy boy could like actually express *liking* anyone.

Mitsuki lets out a heavy sigh as Masaru puts a hand on her shoulder with a squeeze.

“Stand up.” Aizawa obeys, eyes wary. “Come in – I’m guessing you have questions.”

Aizawa bends down to unlace his shoes, placing them carefully aside before threading inside to sink down on the couch beside Mina who glances a bit unsurely between the adults as Masaru and Mitsuki both claims chair for themselves across the small table.

“Should... I go?” Mina asks a bit unsurely.

“That’s not up to me,” Aizawa-sensei says as she looks to him. “It is not your responsibility,” he tells her heavily. “But Bakugou is your friend and you deserve to understand if you wish to. But the topics might be heavy and hard and you might not like what you hear.”

“No one will blame you for going home,” Masaru says gently. “You

are just a teenager, a child in a world of Heroes. It's on them and not you to bring him home."

Mina thinks of tense shoulders and dark eyes at the mention of All Might, at the tremble that runs through the boy when she wraps her arms around him.

Thinks of distant and distrustful eyes, a body that twitches and flinches and draws back at simple touches and the way his mouth curls and scowls but never smiles.

Thinks about the bared purple scars that circle around her friend's chest in a macabre embrace.

Mina has known for a long time now that not everything is right with her friend but she'd been determined to wait it out, to let Katsuki take it at his own pace.

But she also realises that there's just not enough enough time to do so anymore for she risks losing him forever.

Mina feels the empty place beside her like a solid lost piece of her heart and she's sick and tired of feeling useless, unable to do anything but watch as her friend crumbles at the edges.

"I want to stay," she says determinedly. "I want to *help*."

"I suppose we should start at the beginning, then?" Masaru says with a brief soft smile at her.

"That would be appreciated," Aizawa agrees, inclining his head.

Chapter End Notes

The world is a complicated place and for someone whose ability to trust is shot to hell and back there's little comfort to be found in the idea of Heroes.

Is it fair for the adults to allow Mina to stay? Not necessarily but I also think that - as future Heroes, there's a bit a leeway in how they're viewed. Not quite children, not quite teenagers, but part-way on the path to something else and that plays a role in things. They're expected to handle things that civilians can't. It's a bit of a judgement call because it's like Aizawa says - she's not responsible for Katsuki's mental health and safety, that's on the adults. But he gives her a choice because he believes she deserves to make her

own decisions.

Is it fair on Katsuki's part, to have them tell her friend? No. But it's not fairness they're going for - they want her back safe and as her friend Mina might have insight to give. Better to ask forgiveness than permission, as they say.

I appreciate how enthusiastic you all were for Dabi's return. I woke up to some 20 comments after six hours of sleep and spent a very enjoyable trip to work reading and rereading them. You are all so very wonderful and I'm having such a fantastic time just writing and sharing this with you guys so thank you <3

I hang about tumblr as artsy-death and this has been chapter 18 of In The End.

I hope you enjoyed!

Reflections

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

It's a terrible thing, Mitsuki thinks, to realize there's something not quite right with your child.

She sits silent, lost in her own thoughts as Masaru speaks.

Mitsuki doesn't pretend to know everything there is to know about her son. He's a volatile child before the accident, brash, out-spoken and *loud*. She'd been forced into more than one confrontation with Inko about Katsuki's behaviour, little Izuku half-hidden behind her legs with the skin around his eyes rubbed pink from tears.

Katsuki had been louder than the world and then he had fallen off a bridge, landing wrong, breaking bones and hitting his head hard on the rocks. And then he had been so very small and quiet in the hospital bed when they had finally been allowed to see him.

He'd struggled to breathe on his own, tubes showed down his throat and a too large mask on his small face as machines fought to keep him alive, very little of his tan skin visible, wrapped up in white and thick plasters to keep his mending bones in place.

"It's not unusual for children to be withdrawn after an accident like this," the Doctors tells them. *"But they're hardy things and usually bounce back given time."*

The thing about Katsuki, Mitsuki thinks with a thinning of her lips, *is that he never quite does.*

Katsuki wakes up wild-eyed and panicked, howling and flinching and lashing out with a desperation befit of a wild animal. He won't accept their hugs, he shrinks and flinches and rocks in his bed with small palms pressed against his ears as if he could quiet the world. His speech is slurred, messed-up, halting and wrong and he looks at them as if they're strangers even as *kaa-san* and *tou-san* stumbles out of his mouth.

He looks small in the hoodies he favours and he vomits and pants and panics, waking them up in the middle of the night with hands wrapped around his neck and gurgling for breath, gasping about

drowning, drowning, drowning.

They try to put him on medication but it leaves him so shut down that getting out of bed becomes a struggle and his eyes become glassy and distant, locked up inside his own mind, and they quickly give up on that route.

Their son wakes up terrified and he never *stops*, he just becomes better at hiding it beneath anger and scowls.

Mitsuki can recall so many evenings with her son plastered to the news with dark eyes as Heroes and Villains duked it out and they wake up more than once to the low flicker of the television screen visible beneath their bedroom door until one of them shuffles out to bring him to bed.

Katsuki who used to beg them for new All Might toys and merchandise tears his posters down and he stops talking about Heroes, watching the world with eyes too old, too dark, and far too afraid for a child.

It's a slow road to get him back to something resembling normalcy. To get to know their son anew and meet him half-way, to try and understand his idiosyncrasies and worries, accompanying him during the early hours in the morning to watch him disappear beneath the waves just to see the shadows in his eyes lessen.

His reaction to the noise cancelling headphones is the first time Mitsuki dares to *hope* and she holds her husband that night as he clings to her, both so very relieved at that small hesitant little smile on their son's lips as he slipped them on, the first one since he'd woken up.

There's their son *before* the accident and there's their son *after it* but there is no explanation and Mitsuki stops hoping for one, stops searching for one, for she decides that it doesn't *matter*.

She loves her son and at the end of the day that's the only thing she allows to mean anything.

"He was diagnosed with Post-traumatic stress disorder very early on," Masaru tells them, voice heavy. "Depression, anxiety, prone to bouts of disassociation during rainy days. Medications didn't work so we found other ways to help him the best that we could."

"Was there ever a mention of any friends before he started at U.A.?"

Aizawa asks, hands clasped together where he leant forward, elbows on his knees, eyes hard to read.

“No,” Mitsuki tells him with a shake of her head. “Katsuki struggled to relate to his peers and he was expelled more than once for getting into tussles with the older students. I honestly don’t know how many times that brat stumbled home with bruises and bleeding knuckles – it seemed to be the only way he knew how to relate to them. Before Mina-chan I honestly didn’t think there was anyone Katsuki might call *friend*.”

“He called both of them by name,” Mina says quietly, a bit pale but slowly regaining some colour. “Dabi and Toga both, he never does that – only with me and Shinsou. He always uses those odd nicknames of his.”

Mitsuki leans forward. “How exactly would you describe their relationship?” she asks, watching the girl their son had become fond of, opening up to in a way Mitsuki had hardly dared to hope for.

“He... Dabi, he said they were the *same*.” Mina’s brows creases. “He clearly wanted Katsuki to come along on his own free will. It was – it was *strange* to see them together. I don’t think I’ve ever seen Katsuki so relaxed as when he wrapped him up in his embrace. It was honestly a bit eerie.” Her arms draws around her. “It felt like... I’d never truly known him at all, you know?”

“Katsuki loves you,” Masaru tells her gently. “I don’t know exactly what this Dabi is to him but it doesn’t lessen what you have.”

Mitsuki has always been thankful for her husband’s way with words and this is no exception as Mina looks up with those curious golden eyes of hers, considering the words before nodding.

“What about the girl? Toga?” Aizawa asks, turning towards his student.

“Scary,” Mina says immediately and Mitsuki has to suppress a snort. “Dabi was just... intense. Toga, I don’t know, she seemed to think it was more like a game – that Katsuki was just the price to be acquired whether he wanted to or not. She left the talking entirely to Dabi and seemed mostly bored with it. She was clearly possessive of him and more fixated on the fact that I called him by his first name when she didn’t.”

“Do you think he would have agreed to go?” Aizawa asks, eyes now

steady on his student, and Mitsuki curls her fingers tense as she watches.

“I don’t know,” Mina says a bit helplessly and it clearly tears at her to admit it. “He was *afraid*,” she says with a small tremble in her voice. “Of the Heroes but *All Might* in particular. Dabi he said – he told him that All Might had already chained him up during the Sports Festival, and then he hurt him during the exam, and he told Katsuki that it was only a matter of time before he took away his chance to become a *Hero* too and he *believed him*.”

-

Shouta closes his eyes.

I should have fought harder, he thinks with a bitter tinge of regret.

Bakugou should never have been allowed to go up against All Might in the final exam, should never have been chained up during the Sports Festival – he’s Shouta’s student and he had failed him in all the worst ways.

But it was too late now, what had been done had been done and all he could do now was try to pick up the pieces in the aftermath of it.

“Katsuki has always had a strange relationship to Heroes,” Mitsuki says and Shouta opens his eyes to look at her, taking in the flat line of her mouth and the narrowing of her eyes. “He used to adore All Might, wanted to become just like him. But after the accident he tore down everything, got rid of all the merchandise and didn’t mention anything about it for *years*. I honestly thought he’d given up on the whole becoming a Hero thing. But then months ago he brought us the papers needed to join U.A. and it was the first time I’ve actually seen him take initiative to anything resembling a future.”

She shifts her gaze to him.

“You already know what I think about the Sports Festival – Katsuki wasn’t anywhere near okay after it and the exam was just a disaster in the making. I never would have thought All Might capable of what he did, going after a child like that. But here we are and my son is missing because instead of helping you Heroes have managed to just drive in that you aren’t to be trusted!”

Masaru reaches out to squeeze her knee and Mitsuki draws a long breath before letting it out.

“There is a lot that All Might needs to answer to but right now he’s also our best hope of getting Bakugou back,” Shouta admits heavily. “He is the Number One Hero for a reason.”

“Is that really for the best?” Ashido asks beside him and he turns his gaze to her. “I don’t think Katsuki would willingly go with All Might,” she says flatly and Shouta sees the anger in her eyes. “He might just to do the opposite.”

“Which is why I’ll be there,” he tells her. “We are already gathering together a number of Heroes to help with the rescue mission, Best Jeanist among them who has expressed a vested interest in Bakugou’s wellbeing. We’ve kept his relationship with the two Villains on the down low and on a need-to-know basis and only those we believe might have a shot at getting him back will be informed. I’ll also personally have a talk with All Might beforehand about not initiating contact.”

Ashido studies him and Shouta meets her gaze evenly, willing her to believe him, to put her trust in him one more time.

Watches as her shoulders slowly lowers, hands clenching together in her lap.

“I want to be there,” she says fiercely. “I know I can’t join the fighting but I want to *be there* when you get him out. We don’t know what the League of Villains want with him or – or what they’ll have done to him.”

A week is a long time, Shouta thinks as he inclines his head. There’s really no telling what kind of state Bakugou might be in when, not if, they get him back.

But Shouta isn’t about to fail him again – he’s going down fighting if he has to.

-

Hitoshi stares up at the ceiling of his new bedroom, a complicated twist of emotions in his chest as the clock keeps ticking on the wall.

Had he done the right thing, holding Ashido back? The logical part of him says that, yes, he had. Those blue flames had burned hot and violent and Ashido wouldn’t have stood a chance if the Villain had lashed out at her.

He also hadn't liked the way Toga had watched her, eyes heavy with dislike and something possessive as her yellow eyes flickered between Bakugou and Ashido.

Could he have done more? Hitoshi had seriously considered using his quirk but even if one of the Villains had answered him there'd been two of them and he had been wary of escalating the situation as long as Bakugou remained so close to them.

Bakugou...

"Heroes, Villains, the world is fucking corrupt and ugly and I don't do trust. Anyone is capable of turning on you. Ashido could be planning on stabbing a knife in my back and I wouldn't know because she's so fucking genuine and I don't get that. I don't trust it."

Hitoshi had been relieved, he remembers that. Bakugou didn't trust his quirk but he didn't trust *anyone* so that made it fine, right?

He'd called him *paranoid*.

"What do you think All Might is going to do, Baku-chan? He's chained you up once, he's brutally assaulted you without hesitation and a single word from him will pluck your dream right out of your grasping hands."

The Villain, Dabi, had played Bakugou like a fiddle – going after those deep rooted fears Hitoshi had noted but not lingered on and now he was gone, kidnapped by two people who somehow knew him, one of them who had left lasting marks in the form of deep gnarly scars on his chest.

It was easy enough to put one and two together but it didn't answer *why*. It didn't explain the way Bakugou had relaxed so very easily into the Villain's arms if the same man was responsible for them.

Hitoshi knows he's missing pieces of the puzzle and it's frustrating and he feels just a bit useless as he curls onto his side, staring at the blue painted walls courtesy of Present Mic who had taken it as his personal mission to fill out the bare spaces of his room.

He kept finding odd knick-knacks that appeared without explanation, a small stuffed toy here, an entire row of odd little glass turtles that had found their way onto a book shelf, an absolutely atrocious looking blanket with a large smiling cat that he'd fallen instantly in love with.

It is so very different from living with his foster parents.

There's a knock on his door and Hitoshi cranes around, meeting the dark eyes of Midnight as she peers into the room, a single eyebrow rising up.

"Have you been here all day?" she asks, stepping inside and heading for the window, pulling the curtains aside to reveal the setting sun with a low cast of light. She's in civilian clothing, sharply dressed in a black suit, and he'd seen her on the television when U.A. did their broadcast earlier that afternoon.

"Didn't much feel like doing anything," he admits.

"Thinking about Bakugou, huh?" Midnight murmurs, staring out. "We'll get him back."

"And then what?" Hitoshi asks her, drawing up and letting his feet dangle off the tall bed. "Will he still be able to become a Hero?"

"As far as the world is concerned Bakugou was kidnapped," Midnight says, tilting her head to look at him. "He never actually agreed to go with the Villains which means there's still a chance to reach out to him. There's also an argument to be made for a case of Stockholm's Syndrome and action during duress. Nedzu has also acknowledged that we've handled his case poorly and he's planning on taking full-responsibility for it in the worst case scenario."

"You mean if he agrees to join them," Hitoshi says as he looks at her. "Do you think he will?"

"What do you think?" Midnight asks, stepping closer to sink down on the bed beside him, and he shifts slightly, just close enough to feel her arm press against his.

"I don't think he wants to be a Villain," Hitoshi says after a moment, thinking of the boy he had come to consider his first friend. "But I don't think it's quite so simple either. I want it to be, but I don't think it is."

"Bakugou is undeniable a complicated case," Midnight agrees with a hum, folding her ankles together. "But you're given three years to become Heroes for a reason and Shouta isn't the sort to give up on his students."

-

Momo glances up, blinking a bit in surprise as Todoroki slipped

quietly into the hospital room just minutes after All Might and Detective Tsukauchi had left with the tracking device she'd made.

"How are you feeling?" he asks her quietly, one hand slipping into the pocket of his pants.

"Been better," Momo admits with a weak smile. "What about you? I hear you've practically become a member of the *Bakusquad*." Her mouth twitches when he huffs, a quiet, amused sound.

"Bakugou and I have a... shared interest," Todoroki says carefully, tilting his head to the chair beside the bed with a questioning brow, and Momo gives him a nod. "He's an interesting person," he admits as he sinks down.

"I don't really know him that well," Momo admits. "He gave me some advice, way back after the internship, but he's the sort to keep mostly to himself unless pressed." Momo folds her hands together carefully. "Mina-chan is undeniably the one closest to him."

"We sent her a message but she didn't want to come. She's apparently with Bakugou's parents according to Hagakure-san," Todoroki tells her. "Shinsou-san promised to make his way here, however."

"We?" Momo echoes, blinking at him.

Todoroki tilts his head. "You didn't think we'd all just leave one of our classmates in the hands of a league of Villains, did you? Most of the class is on their way here."

"You heard, then," she realises with a sharp look as he gives her a lingering one of consideration.

"That you have a way to track down Bakugou? Yes," Todoroki admits without shame or hesitation. "I also suspect you might know how to make another one of those devices to track him down."

"Even if I did," Momo says, leaning forward. "This is something better left to the Pro-Heroes."

"I agree." Todoroki bobs his head. "There's no way a small team would be able to infiltrate the League of Villains and quietly extract Bakugou while the Heroes are distracting its members."

"Todoroki," Momo says flatly.

He gives her an innocent look and despite herself she gives a small laugh, shaking her head, missing her ponytail as her hair brushes soft against her shoulders.

“Who would even go on such a mission?” she asks him, drawing her legs up beneath the covers. “Hypothetically, that is,” Momo tacks on. “It’s a lot to ask of anyone in the first place and we’d be breaking far too many rules.”

“We need stealth, not heavy-hitters,” Todoroki says promptly. “Jirou and Hagakure would be good options.”

“And you.”

“And me,” Todoroki admits. “In case of discovery.”

“Mina-chan would want to go,” Momo tells him, mind chewing on the idea. “But you think she might be compromised,” she realises as she looks at him, meeting heterochromatic eyes.

“Yes. Midoriya definitively is, too,” Todoroki says, inclining his head. “I believe Shinsou-san might make a good addition since we want to draw as little attention to us as possible.”

Momo’s eyes sharpens upon him. “There’s something you’re not telling me. Shinsou-san isn’t particularly stealthy and even if his quirk is handy he needs his opposition to respond verbally before it can be used.”

Todoroki’s gaze keeps hers steadily, mouth curling ever so slightly down.

“Todoroki...”

“There might be circumstances in play that are beyond what the public are aware of,” he admits reluctantly.

Momo mentally filters through the words, adds it together with Shinsou's brainwashing quirk and then-

“Are you saying Bakugou might have gone willingly?” she asks sharply, straightening up. “Are the Heroes-“

“They are aware of the situation,” Todoroki is quick to reassure. “And it’s not supposed to be widely spread but Bakugou... he knew two of the Villains and acknowledged them both by their names.”

“Bakugou did?” Momo asks, surprised, and then shakes her head. “That’s- I thought the only ones he did that with was Mina-chan and Shinsou-san.”

“He used my sister’s name, too,” Todoroki admits. “Maybe it’s nothing and I’m reading too much into it.”

“It is hard to tell what he might be thinking,” Momo admits a bit reluctantly. “But Todoroki – if he did go with the Villains willingly...”

“He never did,” Todoroki says, leaning forward, hands clasping together. “I can say, with almost certainly, that had Bakugou been in a right state of mind he would never even have considered it.”

“Right state of...” Momo closes her eyes. “Todoroki, I know you’re trying to tell me something without *actually* telling me anything but I have a headache and I’m not really in the mood to play games. You are asking me to break a lot of rules for someone who might or might not have gone willingly with the Villains, who he apparently knew, and I need you to be honest with me.”

“... I don’t think I can be,” Todoroki admits and Momo drags a hand over her face, peering out at him over the edge of her palm. “I’m not comfortable sharing something entrusted to me,” he says heavily. “But if you think about Bakugou, *really* think about him, what do you think might motivate him into such a decision?”

Momo opens her mouth and then closes it, considering the question under the serious eyes of her classmates.

Anger, had been her first answer – it was easy. Bakugou was notoriously grumpy, snarling and snapping and growling at the world around him. Midoriya in particular had a way of getting under his skin in the few short interactions she’d seen between them but Kirishima’s manly rants were a close second.

But outside the anger... Bakugou was soft for Mina. It was one of those things that everyone acknowledged with exchanged looks and knowing grins. If he hadn’t expressively stated that he was gay to avoid rumours about the two of them Momo could easily have pictured something going down between them.

He was different with Mina in a way that was startling to watch sometimes.

So the softness outweighs the anger and she doubts Todoroki was

aiming for such an simple answer anyway so what else was there?

The scars, Momo thinks, closing her eyes and picturing the purple gnarly things that wrapped around Bakugou's chest as he drew his shirt over his head. It had been hard to understand the look in his eyes at that moment, when Mina pressed her palm against the large one slanting over his heart, and when he had left there'd been a lot of questions but-

Neither of Bakugou's parents had a fire quirk, it had to have come from somewhere else and-

"The Villains... What were their quirks?"

Todoroki tilts his head. "Fire," he tells her. "We never figured out the girl's."

Fire, burn scars, and yet Bakugou had gone with them willingly? If the Villain was responsible for them...

But it doesn't feel right either for Todoroki had invited Bakugou over to his house before that, after the exam when he went up against All Might who-

Who...

Momo's brow creases, mind working a mile a minute, recalling the way Bakugou snarled and struggled during the Sports Festival, the whispered rumours of a *panic attack* from the 1-B students, Monoma in particular who had watched Bakugou with a mocking curl of his lips during the summer camp...

That first message from Tooru-chan after catching Bakugou being carted off unconscious...

A boy who might have, willingly, considered going with the Villain's because he wasn't in a *right state of mind*.

"You're kidding," Momo says weakly. "You can't be saying-"

"I'm not saying anything," Todoroki denies but his eyes rests upon her, dark and serious.

"It's *All Might*," Momo denies, shaking her head. "He's the Number One Hero! The *Symbol of Peace*!"

"And not without faults." Todoroki looks tired, Momo realises

suddenly, and the protest dies on her lips, something settling uncomfortable inside of her along the gnawing hunger of her quirk as her fingers curl into the covers of her bed. "I'm not saying anything," he repeats, "but consider what it might be like had it been *you*."

Momo kind of don't want to but her mind won't allow her *not to*.

And she thinks of what it might have been like to be in Bakugou's place, to stand face-to-face with the Number One Hero, having seen what he was capable of, only to find herself beaten so severely she'd lost consciousness in a *school exam*.

Weight it against her own experience with Aizawa-sensei who pushes her to overcome her doubts and who tells her he's *proud of her* at the end of it.

"If Bakugou... if he really is *afraid* of All Might then he won't react well to being saved by him," Momo acknowledges with a twist in her chest. "But All Might he's... he's *All Might*."

"He's *human*," Todoroki says but there's a complicated look in his eyes and a small curl to his lips. "I truly believe he's a good Hero and a good man, too, but you cannot deny that something has gone wrong in his interactions with Bakugou."

Momo wonders what it might have been like to have the most revered Hero in the world look down at you and find you *lacking*.

She thinks she might have felt very small.

And as Momo looks at her classmate, a boy who catches it before anyone else, she finds herself wondering just what kind of man Endeavour really is as her eyes lingers on his scarred face.

Chapter End Notes

I've gone for reason here - it takes time to gather together Heroes, to plan, to make sure all angles are considered, and I think a week is a fair amount of time all things considered. I tried to find anything in particular in the manga but the pages go fast there and I'm just not... wholly on-board with it.

Kirishima isn't close with Bakugou here and neither is Midoriya which drives in a narrative change in how they plan to deal with things, largely because of Todoroki. He understands that the situation is complicated and he knows they don't stand a chance

going up against the League of Villain's directly. He is close to Bakugou and not Ashido, as well, and rationalizing out from that perspective.

He also teamed up with Yaoyorozu against Aizawa and he's takes a gamble in entrusting her with his own thoughts on the matter since he knows Bakugou isn't fond of Midoriya, who is his first friend and the one he would have gone to had the situation been different.

I think it's all fairly reasonable, all things considered.

I haven't forgotten Mina, of course, she has her own role to play and she's about to be up to her ears in it.

Thank you for your absolutely wonderful comments, you make this so very fun to write and share, I cannot express that enough < 3

Next chapter we're getting back onto familiar territories as bases has been established and Katsuki is *not* a happy camper.

I'm artsy-death on tumblr and this has been chapter 19 of In The End.

(Also: guess who's got the week free to do nothing but write? I'm about to spoil you rotten).

I hope you enjoyed!

The League of Villains

Chapter Notes

Round Cheeks = Uraraka

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Katsuki is already moving by the time the fog ripples and expands to let them out, twisting as she jerked back, Dabi's hand clenched around her wrist, a single step caught forward just as her knuckles connected against his jaw, snapping his head aside.

“What the *fuck*, Dabi!?” Katsuki snarls.

But he doesn't let up, his turquoise eyes narrowing before he huffed, his hand coming up to rub gingerly against the scar tissue on his jaw as he straightened out.

“I suppose I deserved that,” Dabi murmurs.

“What's this?” Katsuki stiffens, turning around, fingers curling and sweat pooling in the palms of her hands with the sting of burnt sweetness as she slowly takes in the small dingy bar, counting some five Villains with a narrowing of her eyes. “You're already acquainted?” It's the freaky hand guy from USJ, half-slouched at the bar counter but craning around to look at them. “You didn't tell me, *Dabi*.”

There's a strange lizard man with far too many swords, a creepy dude in a top-hat, another in a black skin-tight suit, and a surprisingly normal looking man, considering the company. The fog bastard is there as well, glowing yellow eyes watching her from behind the bar.

She's painfully outmatched and Dabi and Toga had apparently gone off the rails so she couldn't count on them to back her up, either.

“We're old friends,” Dabi says with a curl of his lips, placing a hand on her shoulder and squeezing down warningly. As if he *needed* to. Katsuki is in so far over her head that it isn't *funny* and she's already died once, twice, depending on perspective, and she's not in a hurry to experience it again.

She bares her teeth.

“What the fuck do you want with me you creepy hand-fucker?” she growls, coiling her shoulders tight as she glared at him, fingers twitching, itching to blow that *ugly* hand right off his face.

The lizard Villain chokes on a wheeze but the hand dude slowly straightens up, head cocking to the side.

“My name is *Shigaraki*.”

“The hell do I care?” Katsuki demands, the scent of her quirk turning almost sickeningly thick in the air, nitroglycerin sliding down her fingers to drip against the floor to a tightening of Dabi’s grasp.

“Don’t take it personally,” Dabi drawls. “Baku-chan has issues with names.”

“He used to call me *Freak*,” Toga shares, sounding far too delighted by it.

The hand creep seems to consider it, Katsuki’s eyes lingering warily on his form. “I don’t care,” he concludes. “You will use my name.”

“Or *what*?” Katsuki snarls, taking a single step forward only to find herself jerked back.

“Don’t cause trouble now, Baku-chan,” Dabi warns mildly as she finds her footing, twisting around to glare at him.

“You fucking *kidnapped me*-“

“Bakugou Katsuki.” She stills, sensing the danger in the voice behind her and catching a strange flicker in Dabi’s eyes before she slowly turned to look at the man. “I understand the invitation comes as a bit of a surprise,” the man, *Shigaraki*, Katsuki acknowledges warily with a thrumming of *danger danger danger* through her veins, says as he pushes off the chair, his entire body-language off and hard to read.

Despite the strange hunching of his shoulders he still stands taller than her, looming as he comes to a halt in front of her, his face tilting close, a single red eye peering out at her from the corner of dead fingers.

“*Surprise*?” Katsuki grits out.

“Surprise,” Shigaraki agrees, hand rising up, and Katsuki freezes in place as his fingers presses against the corner of her mouth, against the scar left from the muzzle All Might had forced onto her. “We are

not your enemies, *Katsuki*. In fact, I believe we're about to become close friends, you and I."

Katsuki jerks back, pushing up against Dabi's chest, and Shigaraki's mouth stretches wide enough that the corners curl up outside the palms of the hand on his face.

"Dabi, why don't you take our *guest* to his new room?" It's not a question and Katsuki's heart thumps hard inside her chest, violence itching through her veins along with a liquid sort of fear she doesn't understand. "Don't worry, we'll see each other soon enough," he promises her with a little hum, hands slipping into his pockets as he turned his back on them.

Dabi's arm draws around her shoulders and Katsuki stumbles before she catches herself, allowing herself to be led out of the room with a single look back at the man.

-

"You seriously have no self-preservation," Dabi comments as Katsuki roughly tugs her shirt over her head, letting it drop onto the floor. "You don't have to pick a fight with everyone you meet."

"Next time I'm kidnapped I'll just make sure to be on my best fucking behaviour," Katsuki grumbles, dropping down onto the small bed.

The room isn't anything impressive, bare save a bed and a small pile of book beside the couch Dabi claims for himself, sprawling out in a languish stretch that momentarily draws Katsuki's eyes to him.

They'd picked up some clothes from Dabi's room across the hall along with some bandages, polysporin and a damp towel and which Katsuki grabs for after bending down to wipe her palms onto her discarded shirt.

"You can't do it on your own," Dabi observes when she cranes to get a look at her shoulder which had been bleeding sluggishly since the teeth creep in the forest.

Katsuki shoots him a look as he straightens up, patting at the couch, and she growls quietly but makes her way reluctantly over, dropping down on the floor between his legs as he shifts to make room for her.

Fingers presses almost gently along the sides of the gaping wound before he sighs and reaches to grab the things from her hands, placing

it aside on the couch save for the towel which he uses to wipe away at the drying flecks of blood, the rough drag of it sending goosebumps up her arms as she draws her knees up, hunching forward.

Dabi remains quiet as he works, trading the damp cloth for the polysporin and spreading it generously with the pads of his fingers dragging over her skin. Katsuki shifts, just a bit, to allow him to wrap the bandages over her back and chest before knotting the ends together.

“Are you angry at me, Baku-chan?” he asks her, his breath ghosting across her neck.

“Fucking furious,” she mutters back but she finds the feeling surprisingly hard to reach for, her eyes on her boots, the new ones Masaru had helped her find, nearly identical to her first pair.

He hums, a low sound that makes her neck prickle.

“I did not bring you here to be cruel,” Dabi tells her. “Shigaraki has had his eyes on you since before the Sports Festival, since that first match where you went up against All Might’s protégé. There are ears and eyes everywhere and U.A. isn’t nearly as well-guarded as it would like to think itself to be.”

“I’m not joining up, Dabi,” Katsuki says, shoulders coiling tight. “I’m not interested in becoming a *Villain*.”

“So you keep telling me,” he agrees. “But the world doesn’t take your wishes into account if you want to survive in it.”

Katsuki tilts her head back to look up at him and Dabi’s mouth curls ever so slightly, his dark spikes drooping, a small fleck of blood at one of the staples where her hit had jerked it in his skin.

She raises her hand, presses her fingers against it, and a strange sort of emotion darkens his eyes as she brushes at it, feeling the roughness of his scarred skin, the cool bite of the metal against the pad of her thumb.

“You’ve become far more comfortable with touch,” Dabi observes and her fingers pauses, lingering before drawing back. “I think I rather like it,” he says, leaning closer to her.

“Don’t be weird,” Katsuki grumbles.

“Is that what I am? *Weird?*”

“I can think of a handful of descriptions that suit you just as well,” Katsuki assures him. “Idiot, for one. Because only an *idiot* disappears for weeks and turns up as a *Villain* for a fucking *kidnapping*.”

“You’re awfully stuck on the whole kidnapping thing.” Dabi draws back, slumping against the couch cushions. “I rather believe I was doing you a favour – sending you back to the Heroes would have been cruel.”

“*Cruel?*” Katsuki echoes, twisting around to look at him properly, propping herself up with one elbow on his thigh. “Is that what you think?”

“I’ve known you for some four years now, Baku-chan,” Dabi says, that strange dark look back in his eyes as he watches her. “You spend so much time pretending to be someone you’re not that I’m honestly surprised you’re functioning at all.”

Katsuki’s mouth thins.

“Don’t you tire of it?” Dabi asks, tilting his head.

“Maybe I do, maybe I don’t, *Touya*.” Dabi gives a little jolt and then he *laughs*, her eyes widening at the sound, fingers curling into the fabric of his pants.

“You never stop surprising me.” Dabi grins at her, staples straining. “Of course you’d put the pieces together. You are right, of course. I was once known by that name, stuck playing pretend at the whims and wishes of a Hero and now I’m *not*. That is the only difference between you and I.”

Katsuki looks at him, a strange little curl in her gut.

“Your sister was kind to me,” she finds herself telling him.

“Fuyumi? Yes,” Dabi agrees, almost thoughtfully. “She was always gentle, kind in a way that was strange in our little *family*.” His mouth curls mockingly around the word. “I’m glad it hasn’t changed.” His eyes sharpen on her. “Make no mistake, Baku-chan. I’m not trying to hide where I come from but it’s not exactly the sort of thing I want spread around.”

“I wasn’t about to tell,” she says with a curl of her lips, baring her

teeth.

“Just making sure,” he says, reaching out to thread his fingers through her hair as she watches him.

“No one would believe me,” she tells him and his turquoise eyes dips to hers. “If I told them what I really am. They would sooner lock me up and throw away the key. It’s nothing short of insanity.”

“We live in a world of impossibilities, Baku-chan,” he murmurs. “I think you’ll find more willing to listen than you first believe.”

Katsuki thinks of his parents, of Masaru and Mitsuki who struggles to love the remains of the boy that had been without knowing that he was well and truly gone. That instead of a messed up boy there was a dead thirty-year-old woman playing pretend.

She wonders what it says about her that she comes to love them despite everything, the guilt gnawing because she doesn’t have a *right* to them.

“Maybe,” she says, resting her cheek on his thigh. “Or maybe I risk losing everything.”

Dabi’s hand stills. “You honestly believe that.” He sounds thoughtful, she thinks, regarding him. “Why don’t you tell it to me? I doubt there’s anything you can say that’ll honestly surprise me.”

Katsuki flashes her teeth. “Prying for secrets are we?”

“A trade,” Dabi corrects. “You already found out mine, after all.”

She huffs, closing her eyes as he slowly resumed his petting.

“I don’t negotiate with kidnappers,” she tells him.

-

“Pretty weird, if you ask me.” Katsuki stares at the television screen where Aizawa and Vlad King had both bowed low after the announcement from Principal Nedzu. “Why are they criticizing the *Heroes*?” She shifts her gaze to Shigaraki, watching him warily as he spread his arms, as if for an audience. “Their only crime was doing too little, too late.”

Toga is sprawled out with her arms extended across the bar counter, a shimmering glass of red alcohol beside her, Dabi leaning up near her

with his hands in the pockets of his pants, one foot draw up to rest flat against the wood.

“It’s their job to protect people, but anyone can screw up now and then, *right?*” Shigaraki turns towards her where she stands in the middle of the room beside a chair that she wants absolutely nothing to do with, lips pulling back to bare her teeth in response. “Why are people expecting them to be perfect? Heroes today have it rough I’d say, wouldn’t you agree, *Katsuki?*”

“The minute protecting people started coming with a pay check Heroes stopped being *Heroes*, that’s what Stain has taught us.” It’s the lizard Villain, *Spinner*, Dabi had told her in an undertone before leading her back into the room, and it’s a shitty identity but if she wants to have a chance here she better pay some fucking attention.

She’s painfully aware of the fact that she’s surrounded by people with quirks that could bring death with a single touch and she wants Shigaraki nowhere near her if she can help it.

“Save someone and you get money. You get fame. Sounds weird to me.” Katsuki’s eyes tracks Shigaraki, trying to ignore how the words echoes her own thoughts. “And in this society, where precious rules are everything, the people aren’t cheering for the losers, telling them to fight another day. They’re *blaming* them.”

Shigaraki tilts his head, red eyes meeting hers.

“Our war is based on a few simple questions. What is a Hero?” Katsuki finger’s curls. “What is justice? Is this what society’s really supposed to be like? Once we get people thinking about this stuff, that’s when we’ve won.” His mouth curls beneath the hand on his face. “And I know you love to *win*.”

“You honestly believe you’ll be able to go up against *All Might* and come out on top?” Katsuki scoffs. “He already took out that monster pet of yours once and there are far more than one Hero out there. He won’t be alone in coming here.”

Katsuki curls her hands fists to hide the small tremble the thought of having the Hero anywhere near her brought.

Can almost taste the iron in her mouth at the memory of those fists, unrelenting and violent as he beat her bloody with a terrifying sort of ease.

The boy had loved and admired All Might, wanted to be just like him.

Katsuki wants nothing to do with him.

She clenches her teeth and doesn't look at Toga or Dabi as Shigaraki takes a step towards her.

"You don't sound very enthusiastic about it," he observes with a mocking sort of thoughtfulness. "Can it be that the boy *chained and beaten* by the *Symbol of Peace* isn't-"

Violence coils through her veins and Katsuki lashes out, palm curling around that stupid fucking dead hand as she shoots off a spark, an explosion following, loud and ringing through her ears as she snarls, boots digging against the floor as she jerks, struggling against the arms that wraps around her and pins her own flat against her sides.

"Calm down!" Dabi hisses into her ear but Katsuki is violence and anger and she wants to *hurt*, wants to *claw the fuckers face off*-

Shigaraki slowly straightens from the floor and he looks up to meet her livid eyes with a curl of his lips.

"Hit a sore spot, did I?"

"I'll fucking *kill you*," Katsuki promises with a rough jerk and a growl that rumbles deep inside her chest.

"Imagine, not measuring up to the Number One Hero himself," Shigaraki mocks. "He's already decided you're not fit to become a Hero so what's really stopping you from joining up with us? You know society is corrupt, you've tasted the backlash of it yourself – know it *intimately*."

"It's *my* life!" Katsuki snarls. "I won't let you or All Might or any other fucking *asshole* make decisions that are mine and mine alone to make!" She jerks but Dabi is stronger and she's left straining in his grip, lips pulled back. "So what is society is fucking corrupt – how are you any better? You spin a pretty idealized utopia of your own making and then fucking *what*? You think society will magically shape up without Heroes? There will always be those in positions of powers and those left bereft, shivering and dying on the streets. Without Heroes and Villains you just have to find another fucking name for it!"

Katsuki's aware of the way the Villains are watching her, from Toga's curious yellow eyes to the silent mask of Mr. Compress in the corner,

and the shifting of the one Dabi had named Twice.

“You could make an idealized world without quirks, without Heroes and Villains, and it would be just the same shitty thing,” Katsuki laughs, slumping in Dabi’s arms. “The rich eats the poor, those stronger takes from those weaker, humanity never learns.”

“You seem pretty sure of that,” Shigaraki says, head tilting, and she finds herself thinking that he looks rather like a very off-putting puppy. “What’s there to say such a world would be anything like you describe?”

“You don’t have to believe a damn thing,” Katsuki says, mania in the curling of her lips. “There’s a profound difference between you and I, *Shigaraki*. You believe you can *change things* but I know there’s no such thing. Take away quirks and humans will only find new ways to destroy each other. Take away Heroes and Villains and there would just be the corruption of the police force to measure up against criminals. It’s all just fancy names for the same shitty thing.”

“Sounds like a cynical way of looking at it,” Spinner says, folding his arms with a rustle of his swords, and Katsuki looks to him. “What’s the point of doing anything if we’re just stuck in the same wheel of fate?”

“The point is to fucking *live*,” Katsuki huffs. “If history has shown us anything it’s that we believe us capable of being better, smarter, and then we just repeat the same mistakes anyway, just in new forms and new names on the wars we fight because we can’t overcome our differences. Look at fucking *All Might* – he believed himself capable of creating a society without crime but what was the cost? He stands at the Symbol of Peace amidst corruption and more and more Heroes refuse to work in poor areas because it means less exposure, less fame, and we’re supposed to be fucking *fine* with it. But his era is coming to an end and with it the rise of Villains who have been biding their time and then Heroes will step up again because that’s what humans *do*. We *rise* and we *fall*. We never fucking *settle*.”

Mr. Compress shifts in the corner. “I have to say, it’s a curious one you’ve got your hands on Dabi.”

“He’s a treat, isn’t he?” Dabi agrees, slouching slightly to put more of his weight on her.

Katsuki twitches. “Fuck off,” she mutters.

“But, Baku-chan.” Toga folds her arms up, resting her chin on top of

them. “If the point is to just *live* then why don’t you join us? What’s the point of *going back*? You have fun with us, don’t you?”

“And if you fail, huh? I bet you won’t have such a fun time in fucking *jail*. Because that’s where *Villains* go and I have better things to do than waste away inside four walls,” Katsuki snarls, ignoring the pout of the other.

Shigaraki lets out a cackling laugh. “If only the Heroes could hear you.” He bends down, picking the dead hand she’d blown off his face, wiping it off a bit absently, and Katsuki notes the way he’s careful to never touch anywhere with more than four fingers.

Just like Round Cheeks.

“You’re saying you’d be fine hanging around if it didn’t mean *jail* if we fail?” Shigaraki asks of her, scraggly light blue hair drooping down to shadow his eyes.

“There’s the whole morality of it, too,” Katsuki says flatly. “I don’t really see the point of going after a class of wannabe Hero children, for one. You really didn’t sell that one in well.”

“But what about All Might?” Shigaraki asks with a curious glint in his eyes as he spreads his hands, the dead one curled in a four-fingered grip. “*He’s* the one we want dead, you know, and *you* could help us make it reality.”

“And have the world up in arms against me?” Katsuki scoffs, baring her teeth. “Yeah, no. I have enough problems as it is without a lynch mob at my heels, thank you very fucking much.” Her mouth tilts with consideration. “Endeavour though? That’s a whole other thing. You don’t even need to ask me - just point and I’ll pretend to trip and smear a healthy trail of nitroglycerin down his crotch. All he needs to do is use his quirk and *boom* goes his fucking nuts.”

Dabi makes a low wheezing sound, his shoulders shaking, and Katsuki feels something warm curl inside of her at the sound, something smug and complicated alike.

I’d do it for you, she thinks but does not say as she presses just a bit closer to him, watching Shigaraki with dark eyes and a fiendish little curl of her lips.

“You have time yet to learn, to understand. You are young – it’s only a matter of showing you the truth,” he tells her, sounding so infinitely

fucking *sure* that Katsuki wants to hit him on principal alone.

Not as young as you think, Katsuki thinks viciously as he steps back.

It's kind of funny actually – he can't be more than twenty which means she has some ten years on him but he doesn't *know* that. And it gives her an edge, a small one, but an edge nonetheless.

Heroes, Villains, it's the same fucking thing in the end – just different executions and ideas. Katsuki chooses to become a Hero for a dead boy and maybe it's left her bitter and wretched but it also brought her *Mina*.

Katsuki might not believe in a lot of things in this world but *hell* if she's about to leave Dabi and Toga to fuck over their own futures in this shitty place and she's going to make her way back to Mina if it so *kills her*.

She has a week, optimistically, before anyone as much as make an attempt to get her back.

Better make it fucking count, Katsuki thinks with a clenching of her fists.

Chapter End Notes

In where the Villains aren't quite prepared for the cynical mess that is our protagonist and Katsuki is quite unimpressed with the entire thing.

I'm feeling pretty great about the week timeline. In the canon timeline All Might would have burst in here but since the Heroes are gathering up and planning and so on there's def some change to things and I'm gonna pace our way through it as sensibly as I can.

I know a lot of you are anxious about All Might and Midoriya and we're going to circle back to those two as well, promise! Everything in its due time.

Thank you for your absolutely wonderful comments < 3 I'm gonna chuck this up and then go back and respond because I love chatting with you guys.

I hang about tumblr as artsy-death if you're about there and this has been chapter 20 of In The End.

I hope you enjoyed!

Freaks

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Katsuki is left to her own device inside the small room and she quickly grows bored.

They had taken her phone but her knife is still in her boot and she thinks that it isn't terribly strange, considering that she's a walking bomb on a good day. She supposes she could make a racket, blow the wall up, but she strongly suspects the Villains wouldn't take very well to it.

They need her, for one reason or the other, but there's a limit to everything and Katsuki figures that pressing buttons could wait for a day or two.

So instead she presses a single finger to the lock in the door and lets a small explosion burst forth, allowing it to swing open, and gives it a kick shut behind her.

Dabi's room is just across the hall but he'd left on whatever fucking meeting *Villains* did for fun in and it had been pretty bare, besides. So instead she makes her way to the one he'd pointed out as Toga's and blows it open before slipping inside, closing it shut behind her.

Toga's isn't terribly impressive either but Katsuki does find a small television and a gaming station arranged before it, a pair of expensive bright lime green headphones discarded on the couch and a game paused mid-play.

A bit of rummaging finds her nothing so she makes her way back to Dabi's room and she really hopes they aren't terribly fond of their doors as she blows his lock open and steps inside.

She's moderately more successful, finding a bottle of cheap whiskey, a chocolate bar, a package of half-finished cigarettes and something that might be generously considered food inside the small mini-fridge set up in the corner.

Katsuki drags it all back to Toga's room and sprawls out on the floor in front of the couch, unscrewing the lid and peeling back the wrapper of the chocolate bar before stabbing a fork into the... chicken salad

thing? She pokes it a bit dubiously but ultimately shrugs, downing a mouthful of whiskey before starting up the game.

It's a horror game, one she's played before, and it's easy enough to re-familiarize herself with the controls, zombies moaning and groaning on the screen as she rounds the corners with the panting of the protagonist loud in the headphones.

There's different weapons on the screen to be chosen from but Toga had, unsurprisingly, been sticking to the first knife and Katsuki takes some amusement in sneaking up and stabbing the various creatures, the shitty alcohol mellowing her mood and the food only making her slightly queasy.

Really – it is a bit pathetic having a rundown bar as a hide-out and lacking any sort of decent alcohol.

Or maybe Dabi just had a bad sense of taste? Katsuki draws a mouthful, grimacing a bit.

She's nearly three hours into the game, the main-Villain monologuing dramatically on screen, when the door is kicked open and Toga grins wide and toothily as she hauls herself up over the couch arm and flops down on the couch.

"The others bet on you leaving," Toga informs her as her eyes flicks to the screen, taking in the wavering steps of the protagonist in denial over the villain being her former lover, now a grotesque pig-like creature. "Dabi said to let you know that he wants his smokes back, it's his last package."

"Should have thought of that before he abducted me," Katsuki huffs, passing over the control when Toga makes eager grabby fingers.

"Ooh, you've been sticking with the knife?" Toga blinks at the screen when the action scene kicks into gear, falling back into first person mode with the weapon brandished in a bleeding hand.

"It's your save." Katsuki shrugs, reaching for the bottle on the table. "Got to stick with the style, right?"

She offers the whiskey to Toga who opens her mouth and Katsuki probably spills more than what is reasonable on the couch but the other girl doesn't look an ounce bothered by it as she swallows down the liquid with a smack of her lips.

“You should have gone with Spinner’s room,” Toga says, fingers moving to snap the protagonist into a roll to avoid a heavy hammer. “He keeps the good stuff.”

“I’ll keep that in mind,” Katsuki grunts, taking a bite out of the chocolate.

“Nah, Baku-chan?” The light of the television flickers in the yellow of her eyes as Katsuki looks to her. “Don’t you want to live in a world where you can be just the way you are without anyone trying to force you into their version of what is *normal*?”

Katsuki pauses.

“I want to live just the way I am. Not hiding, not pretending. I want to be Himiko! Just- Himiko. You want that too, don’t you?” Toga’s eyes remains steadily on the screen. “And you should. I used to pretend, too. Everyday my parents told me that I wasn’t normal, that I was wrong, that I couldn’t do this or I couldn’t do that. But it wasn’t a very fun game, you know? They couldn’t expect me to play it forever, *right*?” Toga’s hands clenches around the controller. “But they *did*, Baku-chan.”

“... I think you’re fine the way you are.”

Toga let’s out a small giggle, cheeks flushing pink. “You say such nice things, that’s why you’re my favourite!” Toga says with a happy little sigh. “I didn’t mind when you called me a Freak, you know? Because you’re playing pretend, too, in this Hero society. So I’m gonna tear it down, just like Mr. Stain said to do.”

Katsuki can’t exactly fault her logic but society will never truly accept someone like Toga - it has nothing to do with *Heroes* at the end of the day. Humanity will always dislike those that are different.

The first case of someone being born with a quirk had been met with fear and a terrified backlash from society. Given time the statistical rise of suicides had instead tipped towards those left quirkless when quirks came to be celebrated.

There was never any balance to it, just winners and losers in the lottery of life.

Would Villains in the long run show her more compassion? Maybe. It was a matter of *what* kind of people they were, in the end, but kin inevitably drew kin and those on the edges of society tended to flock

together.

It didn't validate the murder of those who had done *nothing* even if Katsuki in the long-run didn't care all that much for whatever lives had already faltered and bled in her path. Because Toga is important to her, so much she had been forced to come to terms with when she and Dabi disappeared suddenly from her life.

"Is Stain why you joined the League?" Katsuki asks as she breaks off a bit of chocolate and offers it to the other.

Toga hums in agreement as she bites down on it. "They're pretty fun," she confides with a flick of her tongue. "Tomura thinks he can take out *All Might* and he's so *pouty* about it. I think he goes into a rant about it at least twice a week. Spinner is pretty boring but Twice is really, really funny! I like teasing him." Her legs moves through the air behind her where she lies on her belly, torso half-curved towards the television near Katsuki's shoulders. "And, you know, it was getting pretty boring with just me and Dabi when you were off becoming a *Hero*."

Katsuki slants her a look and it strikes her how young Toga is, just two or three years older than Mina, really.

"... You can call me Katsuki, if you want," she tells the other girl.

Toga's fingers pauses momentarily before a quick flick sends the protagonist stumbling back.

"Katsuki-chan?" Toga tries it out with a thoughtful little lick of her lips. "*Katsu-chan*?"

"As long as it's not fucking Kacchan do whatever," Katsuki grumbles, focusing back on the screen.

She startles a bit when Toga shifts, her chin settling onto her shoulder, wiggling her body to get comfortable.

"You really are the cutest, *Kasu-chan*," Himiko tells her with a small content smile.

-

Katsuki wakes up with her mouth cotton dry and a small headache, squinting up at Dabi who raises his brows in return, smirking.

“Looking comfortable there,” he comments, voice low and rough.

Katsuki grunts, glancing down at the girl curled around her, arms looped loose around her ribs in a half-hug, head turned aside, chest rising and falling in sleep. Neither had bothered to change and there’s still splatters of blood on the collar of Himiko’s cardigan.

“I was saving that whiskey,” Dabi says idly as he slants a look at the nearly empty bottle.

“You fucking owed me,” Katsuki mumbles as she considers how to get out from beneath Himiko without waking her. “And it was shitty whiskey.”

Dabi solves her problem by reaching down and with surprising care managed to haul Himiko up, carrying her over to the small bed and depositing her down on it, grasping for the long pillow and stuffing it into her arms.

Katsuki watches as the other girl almost immediately curls around it with a sleepy little nuzzle.

“You got my smokes?”

She does, in her pocket, because she’s petty like that, and she gives it a pat.

“You’re a menace,” he tells her, threading towards the door. “I’ve been craving one for hours.”

She’s still wearing his t-shirt, an oversized thing that slants on her shoulder, her scars visible on her low edge of the collar. She knows Dabi wears them to avoid his staples catching at the fabric and she’s not exactly cold but she would prefer a hoodie.

She makes a mental note to raid his room at first opportunity.

“I hope you have some actual food around,” Katsuki says idly as she follows him, peering around in half-interest. “I don’t know what the fuck that was in your fridge but it was at least a few days past edible.”

“Surprisingly, not one person in this building knows how to cook,” Dabi drawls as he pushes through a door and then-

They’re *outside*.

Katsuki takes in the cast of the low sun, the chilly morning breeze

sending goosebumps up her arms, the world still so very quiet.

Dabi bends down, fingers slipping into her pocket to steal the package there and flicks it open, drawing one out before cramming the box into his back pocket.

He rests it between his lips, the tip of his index finger lightening up in a little flicker of blue and he inhales, eyes falling shut, before he plucked it out and held it out in silent offering as he breathed out in a long stream of white smoke as she accepts it.

It's familiar, but also not, new because there's something that has fundamentally changed between them since that first meeting over four years ago now.

What are we? Katsuki wonders as she draws a deep breath, allowing the smoke to curl and linger in her lungs as she watches him.

They're not friends, not really, they're both more and less – a convoluted and complicated attraction of two people who finds each other in a messy world.

You and I are the same, he tells her and Katsuki thinks he isn't wrong but not completely right either.

She breathes out.

"You're going shopping," she tells him and he opens his eyes, glancing down at her. "I'll write up the ingredients. I *refuse* to live on shitty takeout."

"Aye, aye," Dabi agrees with a curl of his lips around the black cigarette.

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It turns out at that there's only a single kitchen in the place and Katsuki twitches as she peers into it, drawing back to give Kurogiri a highly unimpressed look where he's lingering at the bar counter.

"You're all fucking disgusting," she tells him, narrowing her eyes upon the Villain playing a game of card with himself in the corner. "Hey! You!" Twice spins around to look at her, a single finger rising to point to his chest as he cast his head about before turning back to her, looking rather like a deer caught in a headlight. "You're helping me clean," she snarls.

“We’re doing no such thing!” He denies instantly and her eyes narrow he throws both his hands up. “I mean- we’d love to! We’d absolutely love to help!”

-

Katsuki dumps the last of the trash into the large bag she’d acquired, wrinkling her nose with a huff.

“Villainy is not an excuse to becoming fucking *heathens*,” Katsuki grouches as she ties it up, slanting a look at the Villain as he hummed to himself, happily scrubbing away at the last stains on the stove.

“I can’t believe we’ve been reduced to slaving away on the orders of a Hero brat.” Twice makes a twitchy sort of sloppy wipe. “It’s not like we were doing anything important and I think it’s starting to look nice!”

Katsuki has never met another person with dissociative identity disorder before and while she isn’t in the habit of diagnosing strangers Twice made a pretty clear-cut case. The way he went back and forth between two very different personalities spoke of something like it, though it could be quirk related for all she knew.

Some quirks had some strange and volatile drawbacks – Katsuki for one had to be wary of smearing fucking nitroglycerin least some poor fucker handled fire near wherever she happened to have sweated. She used to have lousy control over it but she’d learnt to shut the sweat glands off in her hands for hours at the time and was mindful to wash her hands before handling anything a lot of people would use after her.

“Are you really going to cook for us?” Twice asks, pulling his gloves off with a flourish. **“Not that I want to taste it or anything,”** he corrects almost immediately, tucking one hand beneath his armpit as he wagged the other almost warningly at her. **“You could be trying to poison us or – or-“**

“With what?” Katsuki asks dryly. “The fucking rat poison that you don’t have but *really* should stock up on?”

“Well.” He puts a finger thoughtfully to his chin. “You’re not supposed eat nitroglycerin, right? **And you sweat it, right?”** He leans forward and she has the distinct impression he’s widening his eyes beneath his mask for all that it’s hard to tell.

“It’s generally not recommended, no,” Katsuki agrees, studying him. “But unless I’m standing around excessive sweating for a good time there won’t be enough to fucking do anything. And, honestly, it’d be *disgusting*.”

He folds his arms up, leaning back with clear suspicion and then he abruptly brightens.

“Alright! I’m looking forward to it, Bakugou-kun!”

“Bakugou is fine,” she grumbles with a small twitch.

“Bakugou!” Twice claps his hands together. “I feel like we’re becoming friends already. **Not that we want you to be our friend.**”

Katsuki grunts noncommittally, glancing up at the sound of foot step and watching as Dabi paused, a look of mild surprise stealing across his face as he took in the clean kitchen.

“Dabi!” Twice exclaims.

“... You’re loud, shut up,” Dabi says without looking at him. “I see you’ve been hard at work.”

“I am seriously considering calling poison control on you,” Katsuki says flatly as he steps inside, depositing two bags onto the counter, looking terribly misplaced as he peered about, hands slipping into his pockets.

Katsuki quietly despairs about the entirety of the League of Villains as she yanks for the nearest bag, turning it upside down and letting the ingredients spill out.

-

Katsuki puts Himiko on dicing duty when the girl peers inside and then she quietly hopes her knives hasn’t been stabbing anyone recently as she watches Himiko happily dice up the vegetables Katsuki shoves in her direction with a knife pulled from her boot.

She ends up doing a spin of a traditional Japanese breakfast because it’s simple enough to make it a large portion without the hassle of having to flip an infinite number of pancakes.

Rice in the cooker, a pot with simmering miso soup, fish frying in the skillet and a large bowl with vegetables to be served at the side of it

because she wouldn't be even remotely shocked if they were inching towards fucking *scurvy* if they were living on nothing but take-out food.

She might have squeezed a lemon or three into it.

"You don't need to do this," Dabi says from where he's watching the proceedings, half-slouched against the wall. "They can feed themselves well-enough."

"We had pizza for breakfast three times last week," Himiko confides, hovering a bit wide-eyed over the fish with the spatula Katsuki had shoved into her hand. "I didn't know you could get tired of *pizza*."

Katsuki shots Dabi an unimpressed look and he shrugs his shoulders in response, mouth curling up as he watches her sort the leftover ingredients into the fridge before kicking it shut.

"You'd look adorable with an apron to go with it," he tells her, accepting the odd gathering of plates she drops into his hands with only a brief rising of his brow before he ambled out agreeable enough.

He returns, sorting out some chipped cups and glasses as Katsuki plates everything up, sending Himiko, and then Twice when he turns up to peer about suspiciously, out with it as she finishes up.

She ends up dragging out the entire rice cooker in lack of any proper bowl to serve it in and drops it down with everything else before grabbing for a plate and a small bowl for the miso, serving herself up.

"... I'm pretty sure it's not in the norm for the abtuctee to serve food," Spinner says where he's watching the proceedings, arms folded up and back against the wall where he's curled at the very end of a bench. "Anyone made sure he didn't poison it or anything?"

"No-one is forcing you to eat anything," Katsuki grumps as she drops down beside him.

"You're kidding right?" Spinner inhales as Twice slides a plate down to him, grabbing for the fork. "Proper food? Yeah, no. I'm not missing out on this."

Dabi claims a seat across her, Himiko beside her, and Katsuki wonders about the absurdity of the world as she digs in, the Villains around her slowly copying.

“This is so *good*,” Himiko says through a mouthful, hand pressing up against her cheek. “Kasu-chan, Kasu-chan, I want you to cook *every day*.”

“The hell I am,” Katsuki growls. “I’m not your fucking *maid*.”

“But-“

Katsuki shoves a large bite of fish into her mouth, turning aside and pausing as she catches sight of Twice with his mask rolled up to his nose to reveal a scruffy chin.

Out of the Villains she had seen so far he and Compress were the only one of them who were sensible enough to have worn a mask.

The *only* sensible idiots in the place as far as Katsuki is concerned.

She isn’t exactly sure how Dabi is planning on living out his life but shopping for *anything* in the half-assed disguise of his hoodies is just a disaster in the making.

It is a fucking wonder these people had a working force left to go up against All Might.

Maybe they’re just fucking stupid, Katsuki muses as she chews. *A one shared brain cell sort of situation.*

Twice is happily shoving food into his mouth, listening to Himiko with clear fascination judging by the way he’s angled towards her, nodding along seriously as she described the cuts she’d chosen for the different vegetables, a slice of tomato speared and waved through the air.

It’s sort of adorable, Katsuki decides as she watches idly.

Spinner, despite his doubts, it mutilating the fish with large bites, swallowing with very little chewing, and Katsuki finds herself relived she hadn’t ended up with such an absurd quirk. What was he even? Her first guess had been something lizard-ish but she is inclined to think turtle with a closer look at him.

She looks up, blinking as she watches Dabi swallow mouthful after mouthful of the miso, a single drop escaping to trail down his jaw and she follows it down until it’s wiped away roughly on the sleeve of his hoodie.

He quirks an eyebrow at her and Katsuki huffs, spearing a carrot and

popping it into her mouth with a loud *crunch*.

“How come you know him anyway, Dabi?” Twice asks, angling towards them. **“We didn’t think you had friends. Ah- I mean, it’s a bit surprising, is all!”** Twice waves a hand in front of him. “He’s, you know – becoming a *Hero* and you’re... **you.**”

“That’s none of your business now, is it Twice?” Dabi says with a lidded look of disinterest.

“Dabi and Kasu-chan have been friends for *years*,” Himiko says, lips stretching back to reveal sharp canines. “Even longer than I’ve known Dabi!” she confides, knife waving, and Katsuki notices that she’d completely forgone the blunt one from the cutlery in favour of one of her own to eat with.

“That’s disturbing. I think it’s sweet! Dabi needs all the friends he can get – and Himiko-chan too!” Twice makes a sort of jerky motion towards her and Katsuki finds a finger pointing to her face. **“As long as you don’t steal Himiko-chan from us! She deserves better than some Hero nutcase.”**

“My interest does not lie in girls,” Katsuki says flatly. “Kindly remove your finger before I fucking blow it off.”

Twice wavers but then he slowly draws back only to flash her two bright thumbs-up. “Out and proud – I’m so happy for you!”

“You never told me, Kasu-chan,” Himiko says through a mouthful of rice, swallowing it down. “Do you have a boyfriend? Is *that* why you don’t want to stay here?” Her eyes widens. “Was it that cute boy with the broken arms? Or – or the one with the *burn scar*?” Himiko presses forward, all sparkling eyes over whatever imagined romance she had brewing in her mind.

“They’re *children*,” Katsuki says flatly, mildly disturbed by the very thought.

“Going for an older, more experienced man, huh?” Himiko cocks her head. “That teacher of yours is cute,” she ventures, a curious little glint in her eyes.

“Aizawa?” Katsuki raises a brow and Himiko nods eagerly, fingers curling down over the collar of her shirt, knife pointing out sharply. “s a good man but not exactly my style,” Katsuki drawls with a wrinkle of her nose. “Besides, I think he’s married – or at least dating

Midnight and Present Mic.”

Spinner inhales wrong, grasping for his glass and choking down the water inside of it almost desperately before slamming it down.

“That’s unexpectedly hot,” he says a bit roughly, giving his head a small shake. “Who knew *Heroes* had it in them?”

Katsuki presses her elbow down against the table, supporting her chin in the palm of her hand. “Heroes are fucking *funky*,” she tells him wryly. “Have to get that fucking stress out of their system somehow, right?”

Katsuki spent far too much time hanging on gossip pages regarding Heroes. She’d stumbled across them during her research into Hero businesses and there were entire pages related to the odd sexual stuff Heroes got up to, names redacted but sort of *there* if you squinted to read between the lines.

There were only so many Heroes with wings, for one, and only one with feathers that she knew of and Hawks had an... interesting reputation on the net. Apparently he had a bit of a wing kink going for him which Katsuki could get behind, really. They did look awfully soft.

A lot of it was just bullshit, of course.

Midnight was a popular topic on the forums as marketing herself as the *R-Rated Hero* brought all sort of odd fantasies cropping up as “real life meetings” from fans who swore by it. She was a popular dominatrix fantasy and while Katsuki didn’t doubt Midnight would take great pleasure in stepping on them with those heeled boots of hers and a crack of her whip there is a clear distinction to be made between Hero personas and who they actually were.

The public isn’t all too interested in who Midnight is in private, of course, and that was the point of it, Katsuki supposes. Midnight was well aware of what the public would make of a woman like her and she’d played to it, claimed it, made it her own in a way that is honestly admirable.

Katsuki also severely doubts Gang Orca is the sort to whistle like a *whale* when he-

Some things are just better left in fantasies of fans, she decides with a wry twist of her lips.

“Know a lot about the on-going of Heroes, do you?”

Katsuki glances up, raising an eyebrow at Dabi.

“I’m not fucking my teachers if that’s what you’re asking,” she says dryly. “I think Present Mic would *croak* if I even suggested it to him.” Aizawa, too, honestly – not that she had any interest in either of them like *that*.

For some reason the very thought makes her feel vaguely nauseous.

Dabi hums, a low considering noise, rolling his neck with a crack. “Done?” he asks her, voice rolling low and smooth with a familiar glint in his eyes.

Katsuki pauses, considering him.

“Yeah,” she says, pushing her half-finished plate aside and rising with him as Himiko watches them both with a private little curl of her lips.

-

Katsuki peers around the large training area beneath the bar. Someone had been clever and covered up the wood with something a bit more fire resistant and she spots scorched marks on the walls, deep gorges where metal had bit deep and violent.

She drags her shirt over her head before grasping at her shoulder, rolling it, getting a feel for the motion with the wound still on her back.

“This feels nostalgic,” Dabi drawls, drawing his hands from the pockets of his pants and spreading them out, palms towards her, fingers faintly curled.

“I’ve gotten better,” Katsuki says with a challenging flex of her fingers. “Sure you can keep up?”

Dabi’s arms turn alight with blue, forearm burning in a beautiful ripple of flames that lightens his eyes.

“We’ll have to see about that,” Dabi says with a grin that strains at the staples on his cheeks.

Anticipation worms through her, the craving for violence spreading through her veins with the thumping of her heart as she coils tight, the explosion ringing loud through the room as she twists through the

air.

Blue flames rises sharply to meet her, filling up her vision and lapping hot against her skin with a crackling of her fingers as her mouth stretches wide.

-

Katsuki laughs as she flops back on the floor and it might just be tinged with a hint of mania as she looks up at the ceiling, panting as the new burn on her shoulders radiates a low comforting heat.

Boots move across the floor and Dabi leans to peer down at her.

There's a star burst scatter of heat stretching up his cheek, not deep or hot enough to leave permanent marks but *there* and he's bleeding sluggishly from the scar tissue on his right arm where she'd gotten a good grasp of him before letting her fingers pop and crackle.

"Feeling better?" he asks with a stretch of his mouth as he considers her, eyes trailing down to linger on the shining stretch on her shoulder with a curious little glint in his eyes.

"Much," she admits, resisting the urge to just close her eyes and take a long nap there and then.

"You've gotten faster," he drawls. "Still not good enough to beat me, however."

"I'll catch up," she promises him.

"I know," Dabi says and the tone of his voice is enough to make her gaze flick up, meeting the turquoise of his eyes. "You've grown and you'll keep growing, still. Maybe you'll even outgrow this." He spreads his hands.

Katsuki furrows her brows, pushing her aching body up and leaning back on her hands.

"What's that supposed to mean?" she demands.

Dabi flexes his fingers. "At the end of the day we all have choices to make," he says. "Nothing stays the same as long as the world keeps moving. What is today might not be the same tomorrow."

"You're being weird," she tells him flatly and then she has to twist into an awkward roll to avoid a explosion of hot blue, hands pressing

down to flip herself up, feet threading back across the floor. “What the-“

Another stream of blue whips towards her and she throws out her hand in a hasty explosion, boots sliding across the floor.

“Dabi-“

Katsuki bends low beneath a third one, feeling the lick of heat across her face, and then she jerks up and lashes out, hand clenching down around Dabi’s still bleeding wrist, yanking him towards her before trading her grasp for the collar of his shirt with a bloody grip as she jerks him down towards her with a snarl that he meets with calm eyes.

“You’re an *asshole*,” she growls, baring her teeth. “The *hell* did you do that for!?”

“Just making sure you aren’t getting too comfortable here among us *Villains*.” Dabi leans down, so close that she can feel the warmth of his breath against her lips. “We’re nothing like your *Heroes*, after all.”

Chapter End Notes

Katsuki, a Mess, taking in the disaster club that is the League of Villains: *exasperation intensifies*

Can I just say that the character I've been most interested in getting to is Twice? I was planning on having this up yesterday but I got a bit anxious about getting his character correct and I ended up just - ?? I hope I got him right.

Toga being Toga is my fave - she and Katsuki deserves all the gaming time together.

Blown away by your comments as always < 3 I had to pause in responding to edit this up and then I'm gonna walk my dog but I'll try to get back to you all as soon as I can!

I hang about tumblr as artsy-death and this has been chapter 21 of In The End.

I hope you enjoyed!

State of Existence

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Katsuki counts her breaths carefully.

I'm an idiot, she thinks roughly as she stares out over the plain empty ground of concrete outside the dingy bar where Dabi had brought her for a smoke.

She'd been angry after his stunt in the training area and she'd done what she always did when she was upset – tried to *leave*.

And Kurogiri had warped her right back.

One time, two time, three times. She hadn't made a fourth attempt, choosing instead to slump down against the bricked wall, knees drawn up and arms folded upon them.

She'd known, logically, that being allowed to move freely through the Villains hide-out didn't mean she was free to leave whenever. That she had, actually, been *kidnapped* – as in, removed from the situation she'd been in without her explicit consent and held against her will.

But for some reason the reality of it feels like its slamming into her brain with all the gentleness of a sledge hammer and she tightens her grip, the burn wound on her shoulder radiating heat in contrast to the cool wind ruffling the dusty spikes of her hair.

"We're nothing like your Heroes, after all."

It's a warning, as much as Dabi will allow himself to make one. She's known him for years now, has become intricately aware of his idiosyncrasies and come to understand him more, still, with the knowledge of who he had been and whose child he had grown up as.

Katsuki's fingers digs into the skin on her arms, lowering her gaze to the concrete beneath her boots and the spider cracks where grass had forced its way through, a single dandelion blossoming bright yellow against the grey.

Dabi might as well have gone out and said *be on your guard* and Katsuki kinda wants to hit him because he's the one who brought her

here in the fucking *first place*. But he's right in that as long she doesn't make a choice she's playing a risky game inside the walls of this dingy bar because she isn't *one of them*.

Katsuki lifts her head as a door closing alerts her to the fact that she isn't alone anymore but before she can do much more than twitch a tan coat was settling with a flutter on her shoulders and she grasps automatically at it, craning her head up to lever a scowl at *Mr. Compress*.

Gloved and masked, a neat red button-up and a black vest to go with the slacks and fancy shoes. His hand is still extended from where he'd dropped the coat but he slowly draws it back with a strange little tilt of his head and for all that the mask is clever she resents it something intensely at that moment.

Her instincts scream *show man* and she wouldn't be an inch surprised if he was smiling beneath his mask.

"No use in catching a cold," he says, his extended hand coming down to grasp at the edge of his top-hat with a little curl as he leant back against the wall beside her. "I do believe neither Himiko-chan nor Dabi would be terribly happy if you did and I can only take so much whining in this place."

Katsuki's fingers claws into the fabric, turning her head away from him with curl of her lips.

"I believe I owe you thanks for arranging some decent food here," Compress says and there's an exaggeration to the way he speaks, over-enunciated, perhaps, as if he is putting on a show just for her despite doing no such thing. "Simple, a bit plain perhaps, and you went a bit overboard with the lemon in the salad. But good nonetheless."

"I didn't make it for *you*," Katsuki growls out, frustrated and not in a mood for whatever game he had in mind.

"No," Compress agrees, surprisingly. "It's quite clear that you couldn't care less about anyone but those two *friends* of yours." His mouth curls around the word with a mocking little lilt to his voice. "But you're pragmatic enough to make food for everyone *despite* knowing full-well it was being made for *Villains*." His masked face tilts to her. "If you didn't bring to mind a particularly confrontational mutt I would have pegged it as an underhand attempt to try to get on our good sides."

Katsuki slants him an unimpressed look.

“Eat if you want, don’t eat if you don’t want to. ‘s fucking whatever,” she grumbles, looking back to her boots.

“Yes!” Compress agrees, sounding fucking *delighted* for some inane reason. “A refreshing attitude in this society,” he tells her with a laugh, his left hand stretching out sweepingly at his side. “But then, you made your thoughts on things quite clear yesterday,” he hums, spinning around and taking some three steps back before halting.

His right hand slides down, grasping at his mask and pulling it aside and Katsuki narrows her eyes, studying the flat brown of his, the stretch of his lips, and the black balaclava hiding the rest of his features.

“We might seem a bit fanatical when it comes to our values but all we wish to show you is that there are other *ways* because you kids today... you have your values chosen for you. Heroes and Villains – it paints the world in broad strokes of black and white, wrong and right.” He lets his hand and mask fall to his side. “But you already know that it’s not so simple – it quite surprised me I’ll have you know!”

Compress taps his finger against his mask and Katsuki watches it disappear to a secretive little curl of the man’s lips as he spread his gloved fingers out to reveal nothing.

“Who are you even trying to convince?” Katsuki grumbles, doubly wary of his quirk and lips thinning as she considers him. “You say you want to *show us* but it’s not like they’ll be overly impressed to have their classmate fucking *kidnapped*. Wouldn’t it just have the opposite effect?”

“Ah.” Compress taps his index finger against his nose with a knowing glint in his eyes. “That’s where *you* come in, you see. How different are Heroes and Villains, truly, if a prospective Hero-to-be choses to take another path entirely? And a student that was being taught by the great All Might *himself*, at that!” Compress spreads his hands by his side. “I would be quite the devastating blow, don’t you see? How fast do you think U.A. will sell you out if only to make an attempt at saving their reputation following such a thing?”

“I’m fucking surprised they’re not already doing it,” Katsuki says dryly. “But Eraserhead is... He cares, I guess.” She lowers her head to hide a frown at the strange little twist in her chest at the thought of her teacher.

“The Underground Hero? Yes.” Compress folds his arms with a thoughtful little hum. “A man that can cancel the quirks of others at that – now that’s someone I wouldn’t mind having on our side! It can be quite the bothersome thing. But while he’s known to look between his fingers when it comes to Vigilantes he’s firmly on the side of the law when it comes to Villains. It’s a pity, really.” Compress lets out a sigh and a little shrug in a *what-can-you-do* sort of manner.

“You sound like you admire him,” Katsuki points out with a furrow of her brows.

“I do,” Compress assures her. “Well, as much as you can admire a Hero.” He corrects. “He’s a decent sort, you know? Stain might have admired All Might but I’ve always had a bit of a fancy for those that do the gritty work without wanting recognition for it. Just doing what it *right*. If the Hero society was made up by more people like your Eraserhead rather than All Might, say, then I wouldn’t be terribly interested in tearing it down.”

Katsuki’s mouth thins and then her shoulders coil tight because Compress takes a step towards her before crouching down, far too fucking *close*.

“Is it so wrong to wish for something else than what we already have?” he asks her as she watches him warily. “You say that you don’t believe in change and maybe that’s true in the long line of things but right here and now? We can do something about the time we’re living in.”

“Of course we can,” Katsuki says flatly. “But what would be the point of it? You want to kill All Might? Fine. Then what? Endeavour becomes the new Number One Hero and behind him is just a long line of new Heroes stepping up the long rank of what *is*. All Might was never supposed to be forever and the civilians might not want to come to terms with it but the Heroes around him has always known.”

Katsuki thinks of three fingers held up by Thirteen at the USJ incident, think of the skinny form visibly briefly through the smoke, and she thinks of the blood that runs from his lips up after she shoots off an explosion at the weak spot on his left side.

All Might had been appearing less and less for years now but the other Heroes had been picking up the slack – it wasn’t like All Might would be leaving some gaping hole in their ranks. There would be an adjustment period, sure, and there was something to be accredited to

what it meant for the society on the whole to lose a status symbol.

But the world would move on, wheels would keep grinding, and days would keep passing with or without All Might.

“You sound sure of that,” Compress comments, watching her intently even as he smiles. “Something you want to share with the class?” Katsuki narrows her eyes at him. “No? Well, we have a week to figure things out, you and I.” He straightens up, tall, slim and strangely elegant without the coat on his shoulders and already turning. “I’d wrap up that burn of yours if I were you!” He calls as he raises a hand in a small wave over his shoulder. “And please do knock the next time you feel like entering my room.”

-

Katsuki makes away with one of Dabi’s hoodies from his empty room, a dark blue one, and she takes a long cold shower because *of course* there’s no fucking hot water. But at least she comes out smelling like a strange mix of salt water and something spicy after nosing her way through the different body washes crowding on the floor of it.

No peaches, thank you very much.

With the hoodie folded in her arms and a roll of bandages on top of it she peers into Himiko’s room, finds it empty, hesitates but then wanders down the corridor to kick twice at Twice’s door. She shifts as she listens to the scramble and exchange of voices in the room before it opened up.

Twice stares at her.

“I need to re-wrap my shoulder,” she grumbles, pushing past him and into the small room because everything in this place is fucking *small*.

“Why should we help you?” Twice demands but he’s already closing the door and trailing after her in a hastily thrown on shirt and loose jeans, mask rolled down to his throat.

The bed is rumbled and still warm when she drops down onto it and she realises that he must have been napping despite it being past noon.

“Because I feed you?” Katsuki suggests, glancing around.

“It is good food,” Twice agrees with a thoughtful rocking on his feet,

hands in his pockets. **“But good enough to help a Hero?”**

“You’re trying to recruit me, right?” she challenges. “I’m no real use to you if this gets infected and I end up with a fucking fever or something.”

“He *does* have a point,” Twice says, rubbing at his jaw with two fingers. **“Fine.”**

Katsuki shifts slightly, muscles knotting tense as she put her back to him. But Twice reaches for the bandages and starts to winding it around her shoulder, shifting it eventually loop around her chest just beneath her armpits to make sure both the burn scar and the wound on her back was properly covered.

She has the polysporin in her pocket but she can’t get herself to reach for it – the thought of anyone but Himiko or Dabi touching her more than is necessary in this place makes her want to claw something.

She resigns herself to bugging one of them into rewrapping it later.

“This is Dabi’s work,” Twice observes.

“What about it?” she grumbles, twitching as his fingers brushes against her skin only to disappear quickly.

“Just making an observation,” he informs her. “You disappeared together after breakfast and Dabi returned in a pretty bad mood. And he took Himiko-chan with him!” He wilts dramatically.

Katsuki grunts.

“Do you both use Twice?” she asks and the hands on her shoulder stills. “’s whatever but-“

“We **do**,” he interrupts her, body-language shifting as he studied her. **“How did you know to ask?”**

“’s pretty obvious.” Katsuki's licks her lips. “You’re alike but you’re not the *same*.”

“You’re not wrong. But most don’t bother to ask. There’s a lot of assumptions about – but then we are not quite sane! It’s easy enough to simply write it off as madness.”

Twice finishes up, knotting it together in a little bow.

“Thanks,” Katsuki mutters, drawing the hoodie on, tension loosening as the scent of sulphur crept up her nose, and she turns around to look at him.

Hesitates but-

“Doesn’t it ever get confusing?” she asks, studying him. “I mean, is there-” Twice tilts his head. “Are one of you more than the other?” she gets out.

“Who knows,” Twice says, reaching back to rub at his neck with a hum. **“Do you know what our quirk is?”**

Katsuki furrows her brows. “No,” she admits.

“We can make clones,” Twice informs her, leaning forward. “And they retain the personality of the original one. **What’s to say either of us is the real one?**”

Katsuki considers that, fingers curling in the fabric of her hoodie. “I guess that would be confusing,” she says after a moment, trying to imagine it and grimacing slightly. “But does it really matter?” she asks, unable to help her curiosity. “You are you and your clones are you, would it make a marked difference whether you’re the first or not? The two of you are still *here*.”

“Ah, I believe it’s a matter of perspective!” Twice says, snapping his fingers. “It’s important to know oneself, after all. I’d say it’s one of the most important things in the world!” He spreads his hands wide “But here I am and I cannot even tell you if I’m the original or not.” He sighs dramatically. “Maybe he’s already dead and there’s just *us*. **We just don’t know.**”

Katsuki’s mouth thins.

“We see that you do not agree.” Twice sounds amused, of all things.

Katsuki huffs but it’s not like she can make much of an argument. What does it matter if he’s the original or not? He’s a person still, isn’t he? She’s not the first owner of this body but she’s not messed up enough to think it devalues her as a person even if she’s pretending to be someone she’s not.

But then, it’s not like she’s a clone. She’s made up of the remains of two dead people – not quite either of them but her core values lean more towards the woman and she identifies more with the woman and

she is a thirty-year-old woman and not a sixteen-year-old boy.

She itches to tell him. She's looking at someone who might honestly, and truly, understand the complicated mess she's become. Who might even help her understand herself *more*.

But he's part of a group that's kidnapped her and she's not foolish enough to give them more leverage on a fancy whim.

So Katsuki keeps her mouth shut.

Like always.

-

Katsuki folds her arms on the bar counter, slouching.

"You have absolutely nothing fun to do about here, do you?" she drawls to Kurogiri has been cleaning the same fucking glass for more than ten minutes now.

"It does not to do be in a hurry," Kurogiri says, voice dark and rumbling. "That is the problem with today's youth. Always in a rush."

"How old are you anyway?" she asks him, squinting at the dark rippling shadows that make up his body.

Kurogiri pauses. "... Thirty-two," he answers eventually.

"You read or anything?" Katsuki asks, bored out of her mind with both Dabi and Himiko gone from the base and absolutely not fancying running into anyone at the moment. Least of all the hand-creep. "I found some books in my room but it was mostly badly-disguised propaganda which, no thank you."

Kurogiri straightens a bit.

"I do," he says without looking at her. "But I doubt it's anything of interest to a sixteen-year-old boy."

Katsuki narrows her eyes. "I bet you're the sort to read nothing but shitty crime novels," she challenges, shifting, resting her chin in the palm of her hand. "Ever read A Living Soul?"

"... No," Kurogiri answers after a moment.

"It's this really funky book about a brain stuck in an aquarium – has a

real existential crisis going for it and a crush on one of the researchers that work there. It's supposed to get you thinking, you know? Is a person ever free? What would it mean to not have a body? What is the meaning of living? What is *life*?"

She's read it in her past-life but she'd gotten her hands on it in this one as well which was the kind of existential crisis she hadn't been prepared for. Because what did it mean that a book she'd read in one life existed *here*, in another world entirely? Had P.C. Jersild existed in both worlds? *Was* it still her world? Had she just travelled in time?

But then she's realised that Shakespeare isn't a thing here, which was a discovery in itself. And the release date had been wrong on *A Living Soul* too, she knew it had been produced in the 1980's but here it had appeared later and some things hadn't quite matched up to her memories of it. It had been modernized and the continued existence of Ypsilon the brain had been attributed to a quirk instead of science.

Honestly, just *trying* to understand the discrepancies of soul displacement made her want to take a long nap. Because English is a thing, ASL is still the same, she'd heard Japanese on the television in the Before and she's woken up with it on her tongue from the memories of an eight-year-old boy.

"How can a soul exist when the mind of a person can be broken down and manipulated in a laboratory?" Katsuki's right leg swings a bit absently. "'s a pretty curious book."

"There is no such thing as a soul," Kurogiri says, his cleaning slowly picking up. "We live and we die, that's all there is to it."

Katsuki makes a noncommittally sound, slumping back down.

"You don't really have a conventional brain or body, do you?" she points out to the dark fog. "What makes you human if not a soul?"

"What makes any of us humans?" Kurogiri humours.

"Dunno?" Katsuki mutters, giving the question some thought. "We think, we feel, we make decisions, I suppose."

"Correct," Kurogiri agrees, finally turning to consider her. "We live in the here and now. And then we die."

"You're a surprisingly straight forward guy," she tells him to a small hum.

-

At least Kurogiri is quiet, she finds herself thinking, even as she remains too tense to do much more than let her mind drift.

We live and we die, that's all there is to it.

Katsuki supposes he isn't wrong. She's not supposed to be but she is.

But she's an abnormality in the grand scheme of things.

There are days that she wonders if the boy had been unfortunate enough to wake up in her body – if he'd found himself drowning and choking, spending his last moments on a cold rainy street as he bled out in a body that wasn't his.

She finds herself hoping that life had been kinder to him than that.

She thinks, cynically, that it probably hadn't been.

-

"I see you're finding yourself right at home, *Katsuki*." She lifts her head, hand curled white-knuckled around her fork but slowly loosening as the chatter around her quieted, focusing on Shigaraki who is staring down at the wok she'd made for dinner.

It's just vegetables and meat fried up with salt, pepper and chili because, apparently, the League of Villains had a fucking *food budget* and it made no room for more than the most basic of spices. She'd squeezed two lemons into it out of spite because apparently Dabi could take a hint after she'd underlined it five times on the list with a little infinite symbol beside it and one of the bags he'd brought had been half-packed with the things.

"You should join us, Tomura." Himiko says enthusiastically, fork scratching against the plate as she speared a piece of meat upon it. "Kasu-chan made enough for everyone!"

"Did he now?" Shigaraki mumbles, a low petulant sort of tone creeping into his voice.

"If you want to eat then fucking eat," Katsuki growls at him.

Dabi, the fucking *asshole*, has been missing since his fucking stunt in the training room and she's nearly up to a day without him in this shitty place and she's just *fed up*. Her patience had been steadily

declining for the past two hours and she has none left to whatever fucking *issues* Shigaraki has and she glowers at him from her place next to Himiko.

He shifts but then he reaches for one of the bowls left and the Villains move to make place for him across her as he slouches down, reaching up to remove the hand from his face and place it with care in his lap.

“Tomura...”

“Be quiet, Kurogiri.” Shigaraki reaches to pick a piece of meat up between his index and thumb, dry lips prying open up as he dropped it inside, chewing slowly.

Katsuki stares at him.

Creep, Katsuki thinks, spearing something green on her fork and cramming it into her mouth, tasting absolutely nothing as she forces it down.

Conversation slowly picks up around her as Shigaraki keeps eating, one slow drop into his mouth after the other, something unfathomable in the eyes that never veers from her.

Chapter End Notes

Katsuki left to her own device in a place with people as messed up as herself makes for a lot of contemplations. Not all of them good ones.

And reality is sometimes a bit hard to come to grasps with.

Not a lot of Dabi in this one but no worries - next chapter is going feature him rather heavily if my notes are to be trusted!

I had a busy weekend and I haven't responded to nearly as many of you as I would have liked but I'm kicking this up and getting right to it. You make it an absolute joy to write and share with you all <3

I hang about tumblr as artsy-death and this has been chapter 22 of In The End.

I hope you enjoyed!

Cranberry Vodka

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Katsuki wakes up in an empty room, a strange sense of vertigo striking her as she struggled into a sitting position, blinking a bit blearily as she pawed tiredly at her eyes.

There's no clock in her room and the window had been boarded shut, revealing just a smidge of the low dusky grey light and she squints at it, stomach curling as she looks away.

Rubs a bit absently at her ears as she drags herself out of bed.

-

The shower is occupied and Katsuki ends up leaning against the wall beside it, a low sort of lethargy creeping up on her as she gaze falls down to her socked feet.

It's not raining – she knows it isn't – but the water in the shower sounds a bit like it and she grimaces, missing her headphones.

She hadn't thought to bring them, hadn't expected to be fucking *kidnapped*, and it's not like she's not functional without them. They just... make everything *easier*.

The world feels raw around her, a certain sort of prickling awareness that is hard to shake off.

She squeezes her eyes shut, knows that she cannot allow herself any weaknesses in a hide-out of Villains where more than one of them who wouldn't hesitate to take advantage of her.

There's only so much she can rely on Dabi and Himiko's good will and she flexes her fingers, taking some comfort in the stinging scent of her quirk.

-

Katsuki ends up making a simple breakfast and resists the urge to just steal her plate to her room and eat there.

Don't draw attention, her instincts cautions as she chokes the food down, refilling her water glass twice in an effort to make it just a bit easier and ending up slightly nauseous.

Regrets it as she stares down at her half-finished fish with her stomach rolling.

Should have made fucking soup or something, Katsuki thinks tiredly to herself as she digs her fork into it, peeling off a large piece and doing her absolute best not to grimace as she shoved it into her mouth, chewing with a shiver that creeps through her, struggling against the urge to just purge it right up as she swallows thickly.

She sincerely doubts Shigaraki would take kindly to her vomiting all over his plate and he's seated across her, eyes drifting a bit absently as he eats, fingers digging into the fish with a noise that makes her stomach turn on itself.

I want Mina, Katsuki finds herself thinking, the longing nearly overwhelming.

Mina would have worried but she wouldn't have seen weakness, wouldn't be thinking of ways to turn Katsuki around on her head in an effort to drag her into her own beliefs.

Mina is gentle and her eyes doesn't judge when she reaches out to drag Katsuki's headphones up over her ears on bad days.

But Mina isn't here.

A strange sort of loneliness twines with her already low mood and Katsuki's fingers curl white-knuckled around her fork.

"Himi-" Katsuki nearly chokes on a roll of nausea but shoves it down, licking at her lips, meeting the yellow eyes of the other girl who is watching her, fork sticking out of her mouth and head tilted. "Want to play something, after breakfast?" Katsuki gets out roughly.

"Mm." Himiko gives her a considering little look. "Sure!" she agrees. "We can finish up the last chapter together."

"Game?" Spinner asks, mouth crammed with fish.

"It's a *horror game*," Himiko confides. "Lots of monsters to stab."

"Maybe." It's Shigaraki and Katsuki lifts her gaze to him, finding pin-

pricks of red watching her. "I could join you." The frayed edges of his lips curl into a macabre smile. "That's fine, isn't it, *Katsuki*?"

For just a moment, a single beat of her heart, Katsuki sincerely considers stabbing her fork through his eyeball.

"Whatever," she forces out, one hand coming down to press against her ear with a curl of her fingers as her nails digs into the skin above it.

-

Shigaraki peers around Himiko's room, lingering in the door opening for a long moment as Katsuki finds herself prodded down on the couch, Himiko's face momentarily crammed far too close, a little dipping curve to her lips that disappear as fast as it arrived.

"I'll be right back," she promises in a low hushed little voice before drawing back and dodging past Shigaraki with a little bounce in her step as she disappeared around the corner.

Katsuki grabs for the controller, fingers curling tight around it as she stares at the paused screen.

"So," Shigaraki mumbles as he sinks down beside her, slouching back, arms stretching out on the edge of the couch. "What's it about?"

"s a fucking horror game," Katsuki grumbles. "You stab shit."

"Eloquent," he hums but as she glances at him there's a strange focus on the screen, an interest perhaps, and it shouldn't surprise her, she thinks as she unpauses the game in an effort to distract herself.

Himiko had clearly made head-way on her own since their last play together and the protagonist is crammed beneath a table, the shifting legs of one of the monsters just visible, a loud howling scream making Katsuki tense instinctively as it drives a hammer into the struggling bound figure on the table with a wet squishing noise as the body tapered into a gurgling gasping noise for air.

Oh, Katsuki acknowledges with a dawning sort of realization as Shigaraki's mouth curls almost contentedly. *This was a bad idea.*

But she forces her stiff fingers to get the protagonist into movement, her body inching beneath the table, quiet, her breathing too loud through the speakers, knife clenched in a hand that had an ring finger

missing, the bone sticking out awkwardly around the curling end of the shaft.

Katsuki is making painstaking head-way when Himiko reappears with a bottle of vodka and a carton of cranberry juice, three glasses cradled in the crook of her arm.

Shigaraki glances up and Katsuki only narrowly avoids getting their character killed by sliding into the shadows with a little jerk of the joystick as an enormous figure passed by with a dragging scrape of a great knife.

“What’s this?” Shigaraki asks as Himiko slides it all in place, dragging a bar of chocolate from the pocket of her cardigan and throwing it at Katsuki who pauses the game with some relief.

“Drinks!” Himiko says happily. “*Mou*, Tomura, don’t you know it’s only proper when playing a horror game together?” She manages to get just the right amount of an *everyone-knows-this* sort of tone into her voice to make the pale man’s mouth twist into a frown before giving the drinks a stubborn sort of look.

“Of course I knew that,” he says petulantly, reaching for the vodka bottle and yanking it towards himself.

Katsuki wonders if it would be terribly awkward if she just kissed Himiko there and then.

She knows nothing good can come out of drinking with Shigaraki but it’s ten times better than struggling against the clawing low mood trying to drag her under.

-

“Nooooo,” Shigaraki whines, pawing at Himiko with four fingers, thumb carefully tucked against his palm. “You can’t- you have to *kill it*.”

“I can’t,” Himiko explains patiently as Katsuki sinks deeper and deeper into the couch. “We need a *better* knife. If we go at him with this we’re going to be spending an hour stabbing and running and it’ll be *boring*.”

Shigaraki considers that, mouth thinning. “So, we’re getting the knife?”

“We’re getting the knife,” Katsuki agrees with a little toast of her glass

that wobbles the ruby red liquid into spilling over the edge. “Shit!” She draws it towards her, tongue flattening up against her fingers, the vodka mix tingling in her mouth as she sucked away at the worst of it.

“The *best* knife?” Shigaraki asks, squinting at the screen.

“The *bestest*!” Himiko agrees with a giggle, cheeks flushed pink. “And then we’ll stab him again and again and again and *again*.”

“Stab him,” Katsuki mutters into her glass as the tips a mouthful, swallowing it with a burn that barely registers. “Castrate him,” she suggest with a little curl of her mouth. “Tie him up with his own intestines,” she says a bit decisively, nodding to herself.

“Can you do that?”

Katsuki blinks, turning to look at Shigaraki and his wide, almost childish, eyes.

“I... I guess?” she says a bit unsurely. “Himiko?”

“You can!” Himiko agrees. “You have like five feet of intestines crammed into your gut. Can’t do it in the game though.” She pouts and then her mouth curls into a flash of her canines. “It’s a pity, really, he deserves so much *worse*.”

“He does,” Katsuki agrees, staring at the screen.

“The- the *worstest*,” Shigaraki agrees, arm stretching out to give the grotesquely wobbling pig-monster on the screen his middle-finger.

Katsuki snorts, head tipping and a hand reaching out to pat twice at his head.

“Good Shigaraki,” she mumbles to him. And then, because she sees absolutely no reason *not to*, she slouches down against his shoulder as he jerks, a surprised noise that become a stiff sort of tension beneath her cheek.

Katsuki frowns, poking her finger into his ribs to a twitch. “Be soft again,” she tells him petulantly.

“Yeah, Tomura,” Himiko giggles, her eyes glittering as the protagonist’s steps pounded down the winding dark hallways. “Don’t be so stiff!”

Katsuki hums when his shoulders slowly relaxes, huffing out a breath

as she realises her glass is empty and pawing at Himiko until it was refilled, more vodka than cranberry this time.

She stares down at it and knocks it back with a swipe of her tongue against her lips.

There's a knock on the door and they all turn to look as it opened up, Mr. Compress pausing as he took in the picture they made. Katsuki half-slouched against Shigaraki, Himiko pressed up against his other side, a near empty bottle of vodka on the table before them.

"... I'm not paid enough for this," he says, tasting the truth of it, and then shrugs – closing the door.

Katsuki hears him calling loudly for Kurogiri and Shigaraki grumbles as he sinks deeper into the couch, a strange sort of look creeping into his gaze, almost melancholy.

"I don't want- I want to keep playing," he says, frowning while Katsuki's eyes droops tiredly.

"We can play again," Himiko croons, pausing the game with a stretch of her arms up. "Right, Kasu-chan?"

Katsuki gives a soft snore in response, exhaustion and alcohol finally winning her over.

-

"Himiko?" The yellow eyed girl cranes around to look at her, her humming quieting as Katsuki dragged herself roughly up on her elbows. "You're the worst," she says with feeling, grimacing at the taste in her mouth.

"It worked, didn't it?" Himiko's lips pulls up, canines glinting.

"My head is fucking killing me," Katsuki tells her flatly. "It was already killing me and now it's gotten fucking *worse*."

"That sounds like a *you* problem," Himiko says without an ounce of sympathy as Katsuki narrows her eyes at her. "Hey! I got Shiggy off your back, didn't I?" Himiko pouts at her. "And you two looked so *cute* together," she sighs dreamily.

Katsuki grabs for the pillow, cramming it down over her head as she slumped down.

“Please fucking tell me I didn’t cuddle the creep.”

“You cuddled the creep,” Himiko giggles, kicking her legs on the couch, game paused on the screen and her green headphones dangling around her neck. “I think he enjoyed it. Shiggy wasn’t very happy when Kurogiri came to take him away.”

Katsuki squeezes her eyes shut.

“I’m going to get myself fucking killed,” Katsuki hisses. “And I’ll have no one to blame but myself this-“ She quiets, her breathing rough. “Why,” she says abruptly. “Aren’t you fucking hungover?”

“It’s never been a problem for me,” Himiko confides, folding one arm on top of the back of the couch and leaning her chin against it. “I could drink myself black out drunk and I’ll wake up just fine after some six or seven hours?”

“... Is it because of your quirk?” Katsuki asks, pawing the pillow just enough to look out blearily at the other. “It’s something blood related, right?”

“You’re so *clever* Kasu-chan,” Himiko sighs happily. “If you weren’t already Dabi’s I’d be tempted to keep you *all for myself*.”

Katsuki gives her a blank stare.

“What?” she voices, brow creasing. “I’m not fucking *anyone’s*.”

“But Dabi found you first,” Himiko pouts. “Which means you’re *his* and he’s *yours*.”

Katsuki turns her head and buries her face back into the mattress.

“Wake me up when you start making some fucking sense,” she grumbles.

-

Katsuki spends most of the afternoon and then late evening regretting her morning drinking and she’s on a lousy mood come dinner time.

She ends up making beef patties from scratch, mostly in an attempt to distract herself, and slides the bread buns into the oven as she sips away at a tall glass of water.

Glances back when she catches the sound of footsteps and raises a

brow at Twice as he peers inside with two hasty jerks of his head, clearly trying to avoid someone judging by the way he silently tip-toed in with a gusty sigh of relief.

“Who are you hiding from?” Katsuki asks, turning to lean back against the counter.

Twice jerks. “No one!” he denies. **“It’s that fucking hand-bastard! He’s been in a foul mood since waking up and we’d rather not be disintegrated.”**

“He’s probably hungover,” Katsuki says with a jaw cracking yawn. “Didn’t much look like he’d indulged in alcohol before.” She rubs at her neck, grimacing at the stiffness there.

Twice makes a strange sort of twitchy motion.

“You... **Drank with him?**”

“I blame Himiko,” Katsuki grumbles. “Was some good fucking vodka though,” she muses.

Twice clutches his heart dramatically. “Underage drinking? Among *Villains*? What have the world come to!”

Katsuki huffs, rubbing at her ear as she blew out a sigh.

“You should join us sometime,” she hears herself suggesting. “It’s pretty fun watching Himiko go all enthusiastic about stabbing things.”

“Ah, alcohol and us... **Let’s just say it’s likely that someone won’t get out of the room alive,**” Twice says, leaning forward dramatically.

“Then don’t just fucking drink,” Katsuki says with a shrug. “You don’t have to drink to game. Although,” she adds a bit belatedly. “Don’t mention that to Shigaraki – Himiko might have given him different ideas.”

Twice makes a strange noise and after a moment Katsuki realises he’s laughing, silently, his shoulders shaking.

“A Hero being a bad influence on our dearest Himiko-chan? How shocking!” Twice proclaims, shaking his head in mock sadness.

“Kurogiri is going to kill you,” he says with thick amusement.

“Why the fuck is it my fault?” Katsuki demands. “*She’s* the one who got the fucking alcohol.”

Twice spreads his hands. **“Who do you think is going to get blamed, little *Hero*?”**

“Fantastic,” Katsuki mutters. “Can’t hide from that fucker either.” She glances towards the entrance to the kitchen, suddenly leery.

“Don’t worry, Bakugou!” Twice says loud enough that she twitches into a half-wince before she catches herself. **“You should really worry.** Hey! Hey! Don’t frighten the kid! Besides, Dabi is returning tonight isn’t he? **You’re asking me? Hell if I know.”**

“Where has he been anyway?” Katsuki asks with a slanted look at him.

“Mission,” Twice says brightly, twitching before he bent down to loom over her as she narrowed her eyes. **“None of your damn business, brat.”**

-

“You made your fucking point,” Katsuki greets Dabi when he steps into her room.

She’s sprawled out on the bed, head turning just enough to look at him, eyes narrowing as he closed the door behind him with a low hum.

“And what point was that?” he drawls, dragging a hand through his hair with a little ruffle, and Katsuki sincerely hopes he isn’t spreading the ash of incinerated people in her room as she watches the little flecks spiral towards the ground.

She gives him a flat, unimpressed look.

“I don’t know Dabi,” she mutters sarcastically. “Considering how fucking *clear* you were I feel like I should be shagging up with the nearest fucking Villain.”

Dabi pauses.

“I mean, at least Twice hasn’t been throwing fucking *fire* at me and Mr. Compress was downright *friendly* when he-“

Katsuki’s voice dies.

Dabi, suddenly far too close, hands pressed down on either side of her head, leans even closer, his turquoise eyes swallowing up her vision, his breath warm against her lips.

An unfamiliar sort of feeling worms through her, something nervous and anticipatory alike, and she has to resist the strangest urge to squirm.

“Apparently, my point didn’t sink home at all,” he says, his voice rumbling low. “Just how many did you talk to while I was gone?”

“I had fucking *dinner* with them,” Katsuki growls, fingers twitching at her sides. “Kurogiri is probably planning my death right now because Shigaraki is a fucking *lightweight* and Himiko is the worst influence *ever*.”

Dabi remains tense above her for a moment longer and then he huffs, shifting, and Katsuki squawks as he abruptly drops his entire fucking weight upon her, his face pressing down into the pillow beside her head.

She freezes with her arms half-raised on either side of his chest, an aborted move to protest it, perhaps, and she feels heat crawling up her face.

“Can’t leave you alone in this place for even a day,” Dabi mutters against her neck and Katsuki’s mind halts, recognising the exhaustion in his voice for what it is, and slowly, a bit haltingly, lets her hands fall to rest against his back as her brow furrows.

“To be fair,” she says “It’s been a day and a *half*.”

Dabi grumbles slightly, wiggling against her into something a bit more comfortable, and then goes completely lax with a tired sigh, eyes closing.

Katsuki has a lot of things she wants to say to him but they quiet on her lips before she can give voice to them. So instead she shifts, just enough to get her hand up to reach the dark spikes of his hair, smoothing them down a bit hesitantly.

And then does it again when he practically melts against her with a little nudge up against her hand.

She huffs but keeps petting him.

Keeps it up long after he’s relaxed into a deep sleep, chest rising and falling slowly against hers, the wet rhythmic thumping of his heart drowning out all other sounds as she stares up at the dark ceiling.

Dabi is heavy as he presses down against the burn still aching on her shoulder, his jeans digging into her hip, and the warmth of him is enough to make her skin prickle.

It should be uncomfortable but Katsuki finds herself lulled to sleep, hand slipping down to rest loosely against his neck as her eyes falls shut and her breathing evens out to match his.

Chapter End Notes

In where Katsuki is just a tiny bit overwhelmed and Dabi is just a little bit exhausted.

You absolutely cannot convince me that Shigaraki isn't a total lightweight. Knowing Kurogiri he's probably serving him drinks that's like 90% juice and a straw to go with it because he's a responsible adult. Sorta. Kinda. Ish.

I have my headcanons, leave me in peace.

On a more serious note Shigaraki is the kind of person who doesn't want to be left out of things - I think it's pretty obvious in his hang-ups on things though he grows in the manga. Himiko is ruthlessly exploiting this here because she's a good girl like that.

I cannot tell you enough how absolutely soft and warm you just make me when I read your responses. Blessed be me.

I'm artsy-death on tumblr and this has been chapter 23 of In The End.

I hope you enjoyed!

Tangled Truths

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Katsuki wakes up warm.

Her shoulder is itching, something round and metallic is digging uncomfortably into her hip and there's a prickling sort of feel to her right leg which protests when she shifts in an attempt to get some feeling back into it.

Dabi is still dead weight on top of her, sleeping soundly, quietly, his mouth open just enough to send a shiver down her spine when his breath ghost over her neck.

She thinks she should be embarrassed by the way she feels her cock painfully hard between her legs, pressing uncomfortably up against her jeans, but she finds the emotion hard to reach for. Instead there's just a fond sort of exasperation because Dabi isn't helping the situation at all with the way he rests between the spread of her legs, oblivious to her body's response to him.

It isn't Katsuki's first experience with morning wood, some things were just unavoidable when coming to terms with the body she's in. *Her* body, one she'd claimed painstakingly with every burn left behind, but a stranger's body, too, in the way it reacts differently than she expects it to.

Instead of wetness there's hardness, a different sort of physical awareness that is difficult to deny.

The desire feels new, too, a curious sort of heady thing because it's *Dabi*.

She can't put a finger on, exactly, why that makes all the difference but it *does*.

Katsuki hasn't actually thought about sex in years. It had felt wrong, considering how *young* the body she's in is. But she's sixteen and thirty, old enough that it doesn't leave a bad taste in her mouth, though her cheeks darkens because she wouldn't know the first thing about how to go about it.

She'd known her body – had known just how to twist her fingers between her legs, just how much pressure that would leave her body arching with a groan as she grinded her palm down against her clit and she bit down on her lips to muffle the sound of her desire.

Her cock twitches and the embarrassment that had felt so distant suddenly feels overwhelming because she shouldn't be thinking about it, not when Dabi is asleep, not when he doesn't know the *full truth* of who and what she is.

She squirms, pushing at his shoulder to try and wiggle her body out beneath his without waking him.

Ends up groaning when he makes a low noise of discontent, tightening his grip around her, *sliding* up against her and-

This is wrong, Katsuki thinks even as her hips arches a bit helplessly beneath him, her pupils dilating and her fingers digging into his shoulder with a sharp inhalation as his legs spreads. And she realises, quite suddenly, that she's not the only one hard as Dabi's bulge registers with a roll against her hip.

"Dabi," she hisses. "For fuck's sake--"

She gives him a hard shove and he grunts in protest, body shifting, and it should be fucking *illegal* to be so slow, Katsuki thinks, as he pushes up with a tired lidded look that hovers above her as she glares up at him.

"You need to move," she tells him flatly.

Dabi gives her a vaguely confused look and she feels momentarily bad for waking him.

That feeling disappears quickly as a slow sort of realization fills his eyes and he angles down to where their lower bodies are still pressing together, a low hum leaving him as the absolute *fucker* rocks against her almost curiously, his weight grinding down against her as she jerks, biting back a noise.

"Well, a good morning to you too," he says, mouth curving in clear amusement.

"*Move*," she growls at him.

"Are you sure you want me to?" he murmurs, doing absolutely *nothing*

to remove himself from her. "You seem quite comfortable where you are." He presses down, just enough that she can feel where her bulge presses up against his hip.

Katsuki feels heat crawling up her cheeks and she bites down on her lip as his mouth, if possible, stretches even wider.

"Look at that," he says, tone obviously pleased. "There's something wicked in that mind of yours."

"Shut up," she mutters. "It's your fucking fault."

"Want me to take responsibility?" he offers, lowering his head, and Katsuki stills as his lips presses against the skin by her ear. "I could give you a hand," he breathes and she feels the way his mouth curls wickedly. "Or a *mouth*."

Her cock twitches, nails digging hard into the skin on his shoulder.

The silence stretches, almost curiously between them, and Dabi's body-language shifts from something teasing to something more intent as his muscles ripples momentarily, his body stretching on top of hers, knees pressing down between her legs to spread them out with a nudge as he made himself at home, her breath hitching as he rolled up, his bulge pressing against hers.

"Baku-chan," he murmurs and Katsuki feels like a prey stuck below a predator as he moves languish and sinfully beautiful to loom over her. "All you need to say is *yes*."

She stares at him, her heart beating hard and loud inside her chest.

Dabi's turquoise eyes are beautiful in the low cast of light from the window, the gnarly purple burn scars contrasting against the paleness of his skin, the metal in his staples glinting as he considers her.

"You want it," he observes and there's something overwhelming and unfamiliar in his eyes as he says it. "But there's something holding you back." His fingers slides beneath her hoodie, curling almost comforting against that burn scar he'd left on her hip at their first meeting. "*Tell me*."

"You—" Her breath hitches as his thumb strokes over the scar. "You wouldn't believe me."

"You'd be surprised," Dabi murmurs. "About the things I'm willing to

believe when it comes to *you*.”

“What’s that supposed to mean?” she demands but her voice comes out weaker than she means to, more breathless than demanding.

“It means,” Dabi says in a low voice. “That there are things about you that’s never added up. You crave pain for stability and your mind is a mess for no explainable reason. I thought, the first time I saw you, that someone was hurting you, that your parents were closer to the like of my father. But they actually seem like the decent sort and the more I watch you, the more I learn about you, the more I understand that things aren’t anywhere near so simple when it comes to you.”

He breathes out and Katsuki’s fingers curls into the covers.

“There’s nothing,” he says. “*Nothing* that would change my mind about you.” His gaze dips with something impossible, something soft, and Katsuki is struck by a sudden feeling of vulnerability. “Haven’t I already proven myself to you? Or do you doubt my intentions still?”

And Katsuki finds herself thinking that she *doesn’t*.

Dabi had brought her here because he wanted her, enough that he risked her ire and the wrath of All Might to bring her away from the Heroes as he sunk deeper into the shadows of society.

He doesn’t tell her *I don’t want to lose you*, but she thinks that, maybe, he doesn’t need to.

Their history is a tangled web of feelings, of explosions and fire and pain but also moments where there’s just the two of them, shoulders leaning together, understanding and empathy, anger and cruelty alike.

“You wouldn’t believe me,” she repeats, eyes burning and frustration coiling through her. “It doesn’t make any *sense*.”

Dabi narrows his eyes and Katsuki chokes on a desperate sort of noise when he presses down against her, grinding hard against her cock as she twists with a gasp, eyes flaring wide.

“You need to stop thinking so damn much,” Dabi rumbles as he levers more of his weight upon her, the fabric of their jeans rough and hard and uncomfortable against the straining hardness of her erection. “You’re so damn wrapped up in what others might be thinking about you that you forget that it isn’t about *them*. It’s about *you*.” He pins her hands down when she twists to shove him off her and his eyes are

dark and his mouth is into an ugly sort of thing. “What,” he presses. “Will it take for you to understand that, *Katsuki*?”

“I know it isn’t about them!” she snarls as she jerks roughly beneath him only to have him press down harder, fingers coiling around her wrists and familiar heat licking against her skin as his quirk flares warningly. “But it’s not so fucking simple is it!?”

“How would I know?” Dabi says, voice dangerously soft. “How would *anyone* know when you’re so damn stubborn about it?”

Katsuki chokes on a laugh, a wretched desperate sort of thing that makes the heat of Dabi’s quirk simmer down until it’s just the two of them, no flames, no explosions, just anger and a hopelessly tangled mess of feelings.

“I died,” Katsuki spits out. “I fucking died, alright?” She laughs. “But the fucked up thing, you know? The fucked up thing is that I spent twenty-two years as a deaf woman in another fucking world *entirely* and then I woke up *here*. In *this body*, because the boy was dying, too, but unfortunately for him I was more stubborn about living than he *was*.”

Dabi looks at her, a considering little tilt of his head and eyes hard to read.

“That’s why I’m so fucked up,” Katsuki tells him, mania curling at the edges of her smile. “Do you know what it’s like? To come from a world without Heroes of Villains? From a world without *quirks* to *this*. Everything,” she chokes out. “Everything is just a fucking *mess*.”

Dabi’s hands loosens around her wrists and Katsuki’s chest fills with a yawning tangle of desperation and resignation alike as she looks up at him.

“So you’re a woman,” Dabi says after a long moment, tasting the reality of it almost curiously.

“That’s what you took from it?” Katsuki demands, struggling to make sense of feeling spreading through her chest, a strange sort of light, almost airy thing, as Dabi’s eyes trail over her features, lingering on her with a strange considering look.

“You said you were twenty-two when you died.” His head lowers, his eyes, so strangely pretty in their colour, swallowing up her vision. “How old are you now?”

“Thirty?” Katsuki answers, confusions nearly overwhelming. “Why-“

Dabi hums, so close now that his lips brushes against hers.

“It does make me feel a bit better about this,” he murmurs with a little curve of his lips.

Katsuki barely has time to register his intention before his mouth slants against hers, his scars scraping rough as she inhales sharply, fingers sinking into his shoulder, a low approving noise rumbling through his chest.

He swallows her protests, something heady and possessive in the way her presses down against her with a low groan as she arched up.

It's not supposed to be this simple, Katsuki thinks wildly as sulphur fills her nose, thick and overwhelming.

But Dabi proves all her expectations wrong as he kisses her, lips dragging and coaxing her into a halting sort of response, his want for her clear in the hard press of his cock. His lower lip is rough, disfigured by the scars that stretches up to cover half of his face, but the upper one contrasts with its softness and the duality suits of him, she finds herself thinking, heart pounding hard in her chest as he draws back.

“My offer still stands,” Dabi drawls, eyes glittering. “Considering how *tense* you are I bet it's been a while.” His fingers ghosts over the hem of her jeans.

Katsuki squirms.

“I've never-“ Her teeth clenches down. “Not in this body,” she admits roughly.

Dabi's hand pauses, thumb lingering on the button.

“Never?” he asks disbelievingly. “What's the point of *that*?”

“'s weird, alright?” Katsuki grunts. “I'm, ya know, used to different *parts*.”

Dabi sighs, hand shifting away before he slumped down on her to a grunt as she wiggled back with a push against him to get the spikes of his hair from poking up her nose.

“Twenty-two, huh?” Dabi murmurs as she stills. “Seems like an

awfully young age to die.”

“Wasn’t-“ Katsuki swallows. “Wasn’t like I planned it,” she grumbles.

“Decent life?”

“If this is your way of asking if I offered myself the answer is fucking *no*,” Katsuki informs him sourly. “And it was – it was life, I guess.” Her hand reaches up to press against her ear. “You know, you’d think the quirks would be the weirdest thing, right? But I was – I don’t understand how you deal with all the *noise*. It’s been eight years and I just... I don’t get it.”

Dabi shifts to rest his head against her shoulder.

“I forgot that you didn’t have those headphones of yours,” he says with a lingering look. “Deaf, huh?”

“Mm,” she agrees. “I miss it. I think I could have gone my entire fucking life without hearing All Might’s fucking *laughter*.” She blows out a hard breath, slanting him a look. “You’re taking this far better than I expected.”

“You just informed me that I’ve had the hots for a thirty-year-old woman and not a sixteen-year-old boy. My moral compass is entirely at peace.” Dabi huffs out a low laugh at her flat look. “I don’t know what I was expecting but it sounds pretty messy and *that* is certainly in line with my guessing.”

Katsuki’s mouth thins but there’s really nothing she can say to that.

“It’s pretty fucked up though, living with the boy’s parents, pretending to be something you’re not.” She stiffens. “But I guess not getting attached is hard when you’re stuck living with someone,” he muses.

“Your siblings?” Katsuki asks hesitantly.

Dabi makes a noncommittal sound, pushing off her to drop down roughly at her side, the small bed leaving their shoulders pressed tight, the back of their hands just brushing together.

“I’m going to kill him,” Dabi tells her. “*Endeavour*.”

“I know,” Katsuki admits because she’s understood this about Dabi since learning that he was once Todoroki Touya. “I still thinking blowing up his fucking nuts is the way to go about it though. Leave

him suffering. Death is a terribly complicated mess.”

Dabi chokes on a laugh, raising his arm to drop it down over his eyes.

“You make a lousy Hero,” he informs her.

-

The strangest thing about Dabi knowing, Katsuki decides as she watches the fish sizzle in the pan with little slices of lemon piled on top of them, is that everything changes and *nothing*.

They’re still just... Katsuki and Dabi.

She supposes it’s always been like that between them, an easy sort of acceptance of what *is* because they’re both aware that it’s something the rest of the world won’t give them.

He’d eventually ambled off to take a shower and when he returned he’d rewrapped her shoulder after smoothing a liberal amount of polysporin over the wound and aloe vera over the burn.

And then he’d crashed in her bed for a fucking *nap*.

“Ah. *Katsuki*.” She twitches, turning to look at Shigaraki as he peered into the kitchen. “What are you making?”

“Fish.” She rolls her shoulders. “Rice, salad, maybe some sauce?”

He watches her, red eyes lingering intently and she sees it because his the hand that usually occupies his face is sticking out of his fucking *back pocket*.

He steps inside, moving closer in that particular strange way he had of walking, and peering down at the salmon.

“What kind of sauce?” he asks.

Katsuki wonders if he were to bleed if she just... reached up and peeled some of those dry flakes away from his mouth.

She squints at him, wondering if he had an actual preference for food because she hadn’t seen him shove anything aside so far. He ate slow but he had a kind of neat precise method to working his way through whatever she made which she sorta appreciated for all that she really wished he would use a fucking fork.

Katsuki is perfectly fine with people eating with their hands but the way he did it... mouth opening and food dropping in? Yeah. No. He looked like some kind of baby bird only the mama bird was his own hand and just.

It gives her terribly strange mental pictures and she dearly wishes he would just *stop*.

But he struck her as the sort who might just petulantly start doing it *more* if she snapped at him.

“Aioli?” she ventures finally, considering what ingredients she had lying about after Compress had dropped off two new bags that morning. “s garlic, egg and oil, basically.”

Shigaraki watches the fish for a long moment and then his head cranes around and Katsuki stills warily.

“Show me.”

Katsuki gives him a blank look but Shigaraki is already moving towards the fridge, yanking it open, long gangly legs folding into a crouch as he reached inside, picking four eggs from the little bowl she’d dumped them in and cradling them against his chest.

“... The olive oil and garlic is already on the counter,” Katsuki says after a moment.

She watches a bit bemusedly as he follows her instructions, picking up the small basket of garlic and grasping four-fingered around the throat of the oil as she turns the heat of the pans down.

The broccoli and asparagus has finishes simmering so she dumps the water out and drops it into the couscous salad, grasping for a lemon and rolling it absently between her palms as he awkwardly spreads everything out.

“You need a bowl,” Katsuki informs him as he turns to her. “And the eggs should be room temperature but just hold it under lukewarm water for a minute or two and it should be fine. Take, like, three of them?”

“Not four?” Shigaraki asks with a strange look to the remain egg.

“... We can do four, I guess,” Katsuki says slowly.

Aioli was hardly an exact measurement of ingredients *anyway*.

She shows him how to slide the egg yolk between the halved shelves to drip the egg white into a glass before dumping it into a bowl she digs forth and then watches him repeat it with a careful sort of focus.

The garlic is next, peeled and pressed, and then, because they don't have an electrical whisk, she shoves a normal one into his hands and sets him to mixing it together as she drops the olive oil in, watching carefully to make sure it didn't split.

It takes some time and she has pretty much everything else piled together by the time it's thick enough and she gives a low whistle before lobbying the salt at him.

"Pour and taste," she tells him.

His eyes drags back and he tips a tiny amount inside, stirring it carefully, and Katsuki shuts her mouth and doesn't point out that he was going to take *forever* at that rate. It was a fucking wonder *any* of the Villains had taken an interest in the whole process that got food on their table.

Best not... frighten him the fuck off or whatever.

-

"He kissed me," Katsuki tells Himiko who stills, body shifting from the low bend to reach for the controller on the floor in front of the television, turning to look at her. "Dabi," Katsuki clarifies, as if she fucking *needs to*.

There's a funny sort of twist in her chest at the admittance, at tasting the words aloud.

And then she grunts because Himiko collides with her and Katsuki wheezes out in wordless surprise as she's lifted clean off the floor and spun as Himiko laughed, dragging them both back as the other girl sprawled back on the couch, taking Katsuki with her.

Arms holds her, pressed tight, her ribs aching in protest as Himiko nuzzles up against her cheek.

"My Kasu-chan!" Himiko sniffs theatrically. "Getting his first kiss! Oh! We simply must celebrate!"

“s not a big fucking deal,” Katsuki grumps, her voice muffled against the other’s shoulder.

“Mou, Kasu-chan! Where’s your romantic side?” Himiko complains as her grip loosens just enough to allow Katsuki to draw up to look down at her. “It’s so *cute*. Imagining the two of you *finally* together...” Her cheeks flushes pink. “So cute!”

Katsuki grumbles, her ears growing warm.

“Does that mean you’re *boyfriends*?” Himiko wiggles her brows teasingly, fingers reaching up to give a little tug at a dusky yellow spike to a small grunt as Katsuki gave her a flat book. “Ah, you’re so adorable, Kasu-chan! Like a blushing virgin!” Her eyes widens. “Or are you?” she asks, voice hushed with intention.

“We didn’t- for fuck’s sake, Himiko-“ Katsuki raises a hand, dragging it over her red cheeks.

“Just teasing,” Himiko grins at her, canines flashing sharp. “But, Kasu-chan, this is *good*. It means you’re going to stay, right? You’re going to stay with us *forever*.” Hands slides down, nails digging into her hips. “**Right?**”

Katsuki’s chest twists as she looks down at the hopeful girl beneath her, sees something very close to desperation in the possessive glint in those yellow eyes as her grin slowly dims.

“Kasu-chan?” Himiko presses. “You’re not leaving us, are you? Not with you and Dabi-”

“I’m not,” Katsuki interrupts heavily, “going to become a fucking *Villain*, Himiko.”

Chapter End Notes

Happy Halloween you guys! If you're the sort to celebrate that kind of thing.

I'm so very proud of our protagonist but things are getting infinitely more tangled up because the world is a messy, complicated state of affairs.

Neither Katsuki nor Dabi are soft people. I think they're capable of it but it's not their first go-to reaction when it comes to things. Things are getting heated and emotions are a complicated thing

to deal with.

You make me so terribly happy and writing and sharing this with you is an absolute joy.

I'm artsy-death on tumblr and this has been chapter 24, I believe, of In The End.

I hope you enjoyed!

Claims

Chapter Notes

This is the most sexually graphic this story is gonna get and if it bothers you just scroll to the end and catch the last bit with Himiko. It's marked pretty clearly in dialogue when the scene begins.

I think it would be a disservice to her character not to acknowledge that she is an adult in the ways that matter but I am aware that it is a tricky subject to some so, heads-up!

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

The knife slides sickly wet into her skin, burying deep, scraping against the bone of her arm as Katsuki twists, fingers curling around the wrist of the other as she snarls, teeth flashing jagged and sharp.

Himiko stares up at her, Katsuki's blood sliding down the blade of the knife, soaking into the yellow fabric of her sweater.

Nitroglycerin pools in the palms of her hands but Katsuki doesn't let it burn, forcing the violence inside of her to simmer down and leave nothing but the hollow beat of her heart as she squeezes her eyes shut, counting, before opening them up.

"You're throwing your fucking future away and I don't get that," Katsuki tells the other girl roughly. "You- for fuck's sake, Himiko, you're meant for more than *this*."

The knife twists and Katsuki bits back a hiss as the sharp edge scrapes against raw nerves.

"The world doesn't accept us, Kasu-chan," Himiko says, her eyes trailing down to linger on the blood that drips and pools. "You know it doesn't."

"I do," Katsuki admits. "But the world doesn't accept *anyone*, not truly. Even All Might create hatred and he's one of this world's most well beloved Heroes. It doesn't mean you have to throw your life away doing the biddings of others. You're smarter than that – you're *more* than that." Katsuki clenches her hand around the other's wrist before slowly releasing it. "You found Dabi, right?" she points out, pressing her palms down against Himiko's shoulder, ignoring the way

the knife shifts with her movement. “The world will force you to hide but that’s why you’re supposed to find people who don’t allow you to.”

Himiko’s eyes glitters strangely and Katsuki twitches as the knife is abruptly jerked out of her arm, the edge sliding sharp beneath her chin instead.

“You’re a *hypocrite*, Kasu-chan,” Himiko murmurs. “You hide all the time and you allow the world to tear you apart at the seams until all that’s left is jagged and bleedings pieces of what’s supposed to be.”

“Yeah,” Katsuki admits with a grimace. “But it’s my fucking choice, alright? I made a promise and it might not mean much of anything anymore but I fucking made it and I’m *keeping it*.”

“To become a Hero.”

Katsuki bares her teeth. “To become the *Best*. Take if however the fuck you want but I won’t be able to fulfil it behind some damn jail bars.” She digs her nails into the shoulders beneath her, leaning closer.

“There’s something shifty going on here, Himiko. There’s *no fucking way* Shigaraki is involved in those weird monstrous beasts, he doesn’t understand *jack shit*. There’s someone else playing the big game here and you risk becoming nothing but pawns in whatever fucked up shit it is.”

“You’re so strange, Kasu-chan,” Himiko tells her, knife clattering to the floor beside them. “You’re supposed to stay here – that’s why we brought you. To be together again, the three of us.” A hand wraps around her bleeding arm, clenching down. “Why do you have to make everything so complicated?” Himiko complains.

“Me?” Katsuki demands, affronted. “I’m not the one who-“

“*You*,” Himiko affirms, interrupting her. “I don’t like the world, Kasu-chan, and the world doesn’t like me. Is it so wrong to want to change it? To want a place in it?”

“You think this will change *shit*!?” Katsuki growls. “The world will see the death of All Might and it will *hate you*. You’re playing into every fucking expectation! It’s not *revolutionizing*, all you’re doing is spinning in the same fucking hamster wheel as the rest of them.”

Katsuki straightens up, tugging roughly at her hoodie until she gets it over her head, throwing it aside.

Himiko's gaze widens below her, something startled and disbelieving in her eyes as Katsuki curls her arm in front of her, fingers digging into the wound to tear it open further, blood splattering against soft pink lips.

"You think the world doesn't accept you? Fuck the world! Fuck what it *thinks*!" Katsuki bares her teeth. "You might not fucking get it but you're *mine* and I'll fucking tear this place apart before allowing them to use you."

"Kasu-chan..." Himiko's voice trembles, something desperate in the hand that clenches down on her arm, drawing her closer, and Katsuki's palm pressing down flat against the ribs of the other to avoid tipping forward. "Kasu-chan, you say such pretty things while bleeding all over me," Himiko murmurs, voice fervent, desire clear as her mouth parts, tongue curling up.

Katsuki twitches but doesn't pull away as her tongue slides wet and hot over the wound before Himiko's mouth sealed down, fanged teeth sinking into her skin and yellow eyes watching as the other sucked the blood into her mouth, throat bobbing as she swallowed mouthful after mouthful.

The bliss, the soft rosy colour of her cheeks, softens something inside of her, and Katsuki struggles against the familiar dizziness that comes with blood loss, Himiko's shirt already drenched in blood and more disappearing down her gullet.

The clock ticks and Katsuki breathes out carefully when Himiko's teeth yanks out of her flesh with one last swipe of her tongue.

"You still don't know what my quirk is," Himiko says with a strange sort of revelation in her eyes as Katsuki shifts, one hand wrapping around the wound to staunch some of the bleeding.

"I don't fucking care," Katsuki grunts. "You've tasted my blood plenty of times before."

"Not like this," Himiko murmurs, eyes lingering where blood is dripping over clenched fingers. "Never like this."

Her tongue strokes wet over her bloodied lips.

"*I want to do it again*," Himiko breathes.

Katsuki smears a palm print of blood over Dabi's face, ducking back when he came awake with a blue flame already burning hot in his palm, sizzling with a little crackle against her palm when it snagged at the nitroglycerin she hadn't bothered to wash off.

He stills, taking in the sight she makes, bare chested and bloodied with more sliding down her arm to drip from the tips of her fingers, and then he huffs.

"I see you and wackjob had a disagreement," he says, wiping at his face with a strange look at his hand as he drew up, eyes lidded with sleep but looking far better than he had. "Sit down, you look like you're going to keel over, idiot."

Katsuki grunts but takes two steps before dropping down in front of the couch.

Dabi vanishes out the door and when he returns a couple of minutes later he has a med-kit tucked beneath his arm and rubbing at his face with a wet cloth. He settles behind her and Katsuki shifts to throw her arm up against his thigh, ignoring the blood that smears against his jeans.

"So messy," Dabi sighs and Katsuki gives him a flat look when he uses the same damp towel for his face to wipe at her arm but doesn't voice any protest over it. Blood was blood, and it was hers anyway.

He pauses when the wound is revealed, a thumb pressing down in the middle of the two puncture wounds above it.

"You let her drink from you?" Katsuki can't quite place the tone of his voice but there's some curiosity there, she thinks, considering him.

"What about it?"

He hums, flipping the lid of the kit open and grabbing for the small needle kit, threading the hooked thing as she levels her breathing, resisting the urge to press her nose closer against his thigh as she half-slumped against him, closing her eyes.

"How much blood did she take?"

"Hell if I know," Katsuki mumbles as the needle dips through her skin, the thread pulling it shut as Dabi worked his way down with small tight crosses. "She looked pretty happy, though."

“She would be,” Dabi says. “I don’t think anyone has given it to her willingly before.”

“’s just blood.”

“You know it isn’t to her.” Dabi knots the thread in place after snipping it off. “You’re never going to get rid of her now.”

“Funny that,” Katsuki grumbles. “I’m not looking to get rid of either of you.”

“How sweet,” Dabi drawls.

He wraps the bandage tight around her arm, tying it shut with easy familiarity before shoving the med-kit shut and dropping it to the ground with a clang that makes her twitch, eyes opening to give him an unimpressed look.

“What set her off anyway?” Dabi asks, long fingers threading through her hair, clenching down to give her head a little teasing tug. “She’s usually pretty patient when it comes to you.”

“None of your business now, is it?” Katsuki grumps, giving a tug back, ignoring his smirk. “Congrats, by the way, you slept the whole fucking day away and it’s almost dinner time.”

“Did ya miss me?” Dabi drawls. “All alone among the big bad *Villains*.”

She twitches.

“Fuck off,” she grumbles, twisting and hoisting herself up, his hand sliding off her hair with a considering little tilt of his head as she rose to her full-height between the spread of his legs.

And then, because she fucking *can*, Katsuki hoists herself up and drops unceremoniously into his lap as he stills, turquoise eyes darkening as she pressed close, one hand curling around his shoulder.

“I’m going to fucking kiss you,” she informs him grumpily.

And then she does, pressing her lips against his, tasting him with an impatient little noise that he swallowed into his mouth as he parted his lips for her, allowing her to deepen it as his hand settled firm and grounding on her left hip, sliding up against the scar there.

Dabi is warm, he tastes good, and Katsuki can’t help the way pleasure

curls through her, wanting more as her teeth drags over his scarred lower lip.

She draws back and it annoys her that, despite sitting down, he's still taller than her, his eyes lidded with want as he patiently waits her out. Her fingers dragging from his shoulder and down, pressing her palm flat over the calm beating of his heart.

Keeps it still there.

"Can I blow you?"

Dabi wheezes out a surprised noise, his heart speeding up, and her mouth curls with satisfaction as her hand slides down, trailing all the way down to press loosely against the spread of his legs.

"Well?" she demands, tilting her head.

"You are something else," he tells her, voice rough. "Fuck yes, you can."

Katsuki flashes him a fiendish little grin and snaps the button open. She draws the zipper down before sliding back onto the floor and Dabi can take a hint because he gets his jeans and underwear half-way down his thighs before she tugs them down to his ankles.

It's not a terribly flattering picture but it's *Dabi* and Katsuki strokes her cheek up against the inside of his thigh, giving a small nip at the sensitive skin there as he gave a little twitch.

"You're older than me, you know," Dabi murmurs, slouching down further, his cock half-hard between the spread of his legs.

Katsuki is going to change that very, very soon.

"It's fucking hot," he tells her, voice rough and low as Katsuki angles her head, ignoring his cock in favour of dragging her tongue flat over his balls, rubbing against the skin there. Patient, slow, mapping him out as she lets her breath fan hot and wet with an opening of her mouth as she traced up, curling around the root of his cock as saliva pooled in her mouth.

Dabi tastes good. He's still newly showered and she mouths against him, tracing every inch as he swells and grows. He's circumcised, his pubis hair trimmed short, and she wonders if he dyes himself there as well for the strands are dark against the brush of her nose as he

groans.

Katsuki presses one palm against his thigh but the couch is low and Dabi is close and though he's well-endowed, deliciously so, she doesn't have to strain to trace her tongue up, dragging it against the underside of the sensitive head to a low rough exhale.

It doesn't take much to get him to full hardness and Katsuki swipes her tongue over the first bead of pre cum with a low hum at the taste of him.

"You're a fucking tease," Dabi tells her, cock jutting hard and proud and dragging over her cheek as she presses forward to give his belly a nip of sharp teeth to a clenching of his abdominal muscles.
"Katsuki..."

She opens her mouth wide, tucks her teeth carefully away, and swallows him half-way into her mouth.

Dabi jerks, hissing out roughly, his hand finding and clenching down hard in her hair, urging her down further.

She obliges, mouth curving with satisfaction even as her lips strains around the girth of him. Because Dabi is fucking *big* but the low ache in her jaw in a welcome thing and she curls her back to take him better as he sinks deeper into her mouth with a shudder that goes through his entire body.

"So fucking warm," Dabi grunts as she flattens her tongue against the underside of his cock, saliva dripping and pooling in her mouth, sliding down his erection as she pulls back before sinking back with a drag of the tip of her tongue along the length of him, humming.

She has to shift her own legs, feeling her own cock swell in response to the taste of him, the scent of sulphur always so addicting and her nose sliding closer and closer to bury against his pubis hair as she swallows him down her throat.

It takes her a few moments to work around the instinctive gag when he presses deep, threatening to curl down her throat, and she shifts, brows furrowing in concentration as she gets a feel for it, bobbing along the length of him tryingly as his fingers grasp hard at her hair.

And then she angles *just so* and takes him all the way to the root.

Dabi's hips jerks but Katsuki presses down on his thighs, swallowing

around him, her throat folding tight to a muted curse.

She holds him there, measuring her limits as a small tremble works through his body, muscles straining to keep still, and she appreciates it, she does. But she wants it rougher, wants it harder, wants to see him come *undone*.

Katsuki draws up and all the way off him.

“I want you to fuck my mouth, Dabi,” she murmurs, tongue dipping out to curl around the head of his cock with a fiendish little grin.

His eyes sharpens on her and he presses against the back of her head. Katsuki keeps his gaze as she opens her mouth, not resisting an inch as he guides her all the way back, dragging her up roughly before repeating it, the muscles in his arms bunching tight as he simultaneously thrust up to bury deep and hard.

Katsuki adjust to allow it, her cock straining painfully against her jeans as Dabi sets a rough pace, the pulling at her hair doing delicious things to her own body. Her jaw aches and there's a raw sort of thing to give up control like this, feeling the way his cock drags and thrusts into her, his pleasure clear in the dark hunger in his eyes.

Dabi shifts a leg, sliding it beneath hers and pushing up.

She nearly chokes in surprise, groaning low as her thighs clenched down around him, pushing up harder against him as he sunk into her, so deep that his pubes tickled against her nose, his balls pressing against her chin as he held her there.

A low straining groan from him makes her cock twitch and she bunches her muscles, pressing him just an inch deeper, rubbing her tongue against him as best as she can.

There's little care for anything but his own pleasure, his head tipping back and hips arching as he buried into her mouth as she struggled not to gag.

“So fucking good,” Dabi praises as he draws her up, allowing her to breathe in through her nose before he thrust back into her as he buried her head between his legs.

It's rough, it's degrading, it's fucking *delicious*.

Her hands slides around his bare thighs, pressing down as he pressed

up, and his pace stutters.

“Fuck-“ Dabi tries to tug her up but Katsuki refuses, pressing her hips harder against him, rubbing herself against him as he comes with a choked groan of her name, the warm sticky come hitting the back of her throat, swallowed automatically to another jerk of his hips as he hissed out through his teeth.

She drags her mouth slowly off him, allowing his softening cock to slip out with stroke of her tongue along it. Works his jeans and underwear up to a brief rise of his hips to allow it, his eyes dark and hooded as he watches her.

The hand in her hair drags her roughly up and Katsuki finds herself twisted around, hands making short work of her jeans and getting them half-way down her hips with a bobbing of her cock before he drags her roughly back against his chest.

She lands a bit awkwardly in his lap, one arm looping around her chest to pin her close. His bare hand circles her straining cock and she twitches back against him, hissing as he dragged up, following the curve of it before his thumb pressed down against the slit of it.

“You’re a fucking wonder,” he groans into her ear before his mouth seals down, sucking wetly as his grip tightened, her mind buzzing from the feeling of him *just holding her*.

His hands are calloused and so fucking *warm* and it’s *Dabi* and Katsuki-

“Relax,” he tells her, hand smoothing up to catch the pre-cum at the tip of the sensitive head before curling down with a firm twist that made her hips arch up with a groan that she turns to hide against her shoulder, shivering as he stroked her, his mouth trailing down her throat.

Dabi’s fingers are long and strong and Katsuki struggles against a whine that builds low in her throat, sucking in a sharp breath, acutely aware of what was being done to her and just *who* was doing it, a coiling sort of disbelief and heady overwhelming want alike tangling inside of her.

“Just like that,” he encourages in a low rough voice as she arches up, his left arm wrapping around her chest to keep her pinned and her nails digs into the fabric of his jeans. “Feels good, doesn’t it?”

She gasps his name as he twists his palm up before dragging roughly down the length of her cock and she presses herself back against him, head tipping to bare her neck further as he scraped his teeth against her pulse point.

It takes her an embarrassingly short amount of time to come, Dabi's hand wrapped hard around her and her hips arching as his teeth sunk into her skin and pleasure explodes sharp and overwhelming over her senses as her breath stutters.

Her hips jerk as he twists his hand up, making sure she was well and truly properly spent as she softened in his grip.

Dabi detaches from her throat and Katsuki gives his hand a bleary look as she registers the white come clinging stickily to his fingers.

And then she flushes a deep dark shade of red as his tongue flattens against them to swallow it down.

"Must you?" she asks, strangely transfixed by the sight he made as he hummed.

"Says the woman who just swallowed mine," he says with a slanted look.

Katsuki gives him a flat one back, trying to ignore the warmth in her chest as the acknowledgement of what she *is* as his mouth twitches, his eyes dark and knowing.

-

Dabi isn't wrong about Himiko, Katsuki soon learns.

There's a new sort of intention to the way the other girl is watching her, lingering as Katsuki worked her way through the dinner preparations while trying firmly to ignore it.

She isn't... entirely sure what to feel about it.

You're mine, she'd told Himiko, the words ringing sure and possessive with claim, and Himiko hadn't protested it.

Katsuki slices through a carrot with unnecessary violence.

People aren't things to be owned, that, if anything, is Katsuki's firm conviction in life.

She doesn't belong to anyone, she has no place to claim others, and-

Fuck, Katsuki thinks as she stares a bit blankly down at the cutting board.

I'm so fucking compromised that it isn't even funny.

Chapter End Notes

In which Himiko and Katsuki comes to a tangle of things and there's some revelations following it.

Tick-tock goes the clock for our dear protagonist.

Katsuki and Dabi are both physical creatures so it's been kind of unavoidable that sex would become part of things. Katsuki is thirty even if her body isn't and I've tried to be respectful in handling it.

This chapter is the most graphic this story is gonna get on that topic, however.

Do with that as you wish.

If you are interested I might add a scene in a companion piece.

We're sliding back into a POV of a favorite of mine in the next chapter so keep your eyes peeled! I've come down with a cold, unfortunately, so I'm currently working my way through that and I probs won't be doing any writing this weekend.

I got my fever down enough to wrap this up but I do apologize because answering your comments will have to wait for a bit.

But I do so enjoy them, thank you all for making this a wonderful thing to write and share with you guys.

I hang about tumblr as artsy-death if you want to swing by there and this has been chapter 25 of In The End.

I hope you enjoyed!

Silent Skies

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Mina finds herself just a tiny bit overwhelmed.

She hasn't seen this many high-ranking Heroes in her life, all of them gathering together in preparation of getting her best friend back.

It gives her hope, just as much as it's a startling thing to behold.

There's Endeavour side-by-side with Hawks whose wings are red and bright and his mouth stretched out in a grin.

Ryukyu stands with her arms folded and a thoughtful furrow of her brow as she listens to All Might, broad chested and golden haired in the middle of them.

The Hero Katsuki had interned with is there, hand stroking down the curl of his fringe, most of his face hidden behind a large collar. Best Jeanist. And then beside him – Edgeshot, visibly shorter than most of his peers, one leg drawn up, foot flat against the wall, an distant thoughtful look on his face.

Kamui Woods and Mt. Lady are the only new comers to the scene and Mina takes some comfort in that the two of them look just as out of the depth as she feels in this room of Heroes.

Most of them rank above ten, the best and brightest that society had to offer.

They're taking this seriously, Mina acknowledges to herself where she stands next to Aizawa-sensei and a Detective Tsukauchi. The two of them makes an almost startling contrast to the bright-clad Heroes, especially the detective in his beige coat and hat, his face plain and non-descript.

Mina had been introduced to him only a couple of days earlier when he asked to hear her take on things, eyes firm and non-judgemental as she struggled her way through the happenings that had resulted in her best friend's kidnapping.

There'd been a strange look in his eyes when she told him about

Katsuki's terror of All Might but not once had he shoved any sigh of disbelieving her words. If anything he had been grim at the end of it, face lowering as he considered what she'd told him.

Mina tilts her head up, seeking her teacher's gaze, but finds him watching All Might with bloodshot eyes.

"Thank you all for coming," Detective Tsukauchi says, stepping forward, easily taking control of the room as the Heroes turn to him.

"Naomasa," All Might greets, fondness in the warmth of his voice.

The Detective inclines his head in response.

"I know this is on short notice and there's a lot we need to work our way through."

He steps his way up to the center of the room, fishing through his pocket for a small stick which he slides into the computer.

Mina takes a step forward, eyes on the screen on the wall as a large map unfolded, narrowing down to a small red circle.

"We are confident that we've managed to trace the League of Villain's hide-out to the Kamino Ward. It appears to be an old bar. During the last two days we've gotten reports back on both Dabi," here a blurry picture of the scarred man from the forest folds up, "and Mr. Compress," a picture of a man in trench coat, masked and tall as he steps out from a door joins it, "entering and leaving the premises."

Mina's eyes fixates on the picture of Dabi – on the patchy purple skin and black hair, one hand in his pocket and face blurred.

Next the picture of it bar itself joins the screen, a run-down thing with a blinking sign out front.

Mina had pictured far worse things, it seems almost anti-climactic to imagine her best friend trapped behind those old wooden walls. It would be easy enough to just *blow up* but Mina knows it's not so simple, either, for she remembers USJ and the man with the disintegrating quirk.

Not to mention the man with the teleportation quirk, Dabi with his violent blue flames and the sharp grin of the girl, Toga, who Asui and Uraraka hadn't managed to bring down despite her never revealing her quirk.

And there were more than them as well, Villains that hadn't been caught on pictures but had been described in the class chat after the summer camp when everyone came together to share what had gone down with the realization that one of their own was missing.

Katsuki...

Four days had passed since his kidnapping, in just two more the Heroes were supposed to strike.

It's a terrifying thing to imagine and Mina can't begin to wrap her mind about what it might be like to spend an entire week in the hands of Villains. What might have been done to him, what thoughts he might have as day after day counts by without any Heroes many an appearance to get him back.

What if he believes we've given up on him? Mina thinks restlessly as she listens to Tsukauchi lay out what information they had.

Sketches of Villains appear on the screen, a lizard-like one beside a man in a dark body-suit, a red haired man with broad lips, Kurogiri with the warp quirk and, then, Shigaraki Tomura – pale haired and hunched with a terrifying stretch of a smile behind the hand on his face.

A picture of the first noumo from USJ and then those that had attacked at Hosu – all of them broad and warped in their abilities and quirks, created to withstand force and create destruction.

Creatures once human, genetically engineered to do the bidding of the Villains.

All in all, it paints a very grim picture.

-

"Ashido-san, please remain," Tsukauchi bids at the end of the meeting and Mina feels the way more than one of the Heroes turns to regard her curiously. She's acutely aware of how displaced she is among these people and she straightens her back and firms her mouth.

She's relieved when Aizawa-sensei remains a steadying presence at her side.

"Best Jeanist, Edgeshot, Hawks... if you could as well."

The Heroes in question looks to him and of the three it's Best Jeanist who appears the least surprised, pushing away from the wall he'd been leaning against for the last half of the meeting.

He's tall, Mina observes, wondering just what kind of man he is as he approaches them. Shinsou had told her that Katsuki hadn't been very impressed by the man at first but that it had changed the last day or so.

She had also seen Katsuki wear the Best Jeanist t-shirt on more than one occasion which meant that her friend had taken a liking to him in one way or the other.

Mina's fairly certain that if Katsuki would have burnt the shirt otherwise.

"Well, Tsukauchi-san, now you've got me all curious," Hawks says, wings sweeping up to tuck behind him as he hoisted himself up on the table they'd crowded around for the debriefing, though few of them had chosen to sit down. "What could you possibly want with little ol' me?"

She looks curiously to the Number Three Hero. He's not very tall, slim and narrowly built, and she finds herself wondering if it's consequent of his quirk as she eyes the beautiful feathery wings on his back.

"This has something to do with why Bakugou was taken," Best Jeanist says, eyes slanting towards Mina before focusing sharply on the Detective.

Tsukauchi inclines his head.

"I would like this so remain between us. If you cannot promise me that I request that you leave as it possibly compromises the future of one of our Heroes."

Edgeshot tilts his head. "Why us?"

"You have all proven to be calm and level headed in making calls in compromising situations," Tsukauchi tells them. "And that is exactly what is needed here. There's also a need for... discretion."

"Discretion is my middle-name," Hawks says, drawing one leg up and planting his boot on the table. "You can count on me."

"I will stay as well," Edgeshot agrees. "I trust your judgement,

Tsukauchi-san.”

“You already know my thoughts on the matter,” Best Jeanist says firmly. “I will aid in what capacity I can. He was my student for a time, after all.”

“Thank you,” Aizawa-sensei says from beside her and Mina looks up at him in surprise.

“Of course,” Edgeshot responds almost immediately, grey eyes focusing on him. “I owe you, Eraserhead. I will do what I can to bring your student back.”

“So?” Hawks presses, eyes intent behind blue-tinted visors.

Tsukauchi shifts, pressing down on the computer and bringing up a picture of Dabi and then a sketch of Toga side-by-side.

“When the two Villains Dabi and Toga revealed themselves in the forest it was made apparent that Bakugou-san was already familiar with the two of them,” Tsukauchi reveals, hands pressing together. “The one known as Dabi was especially intent on Bakugou-san going along with them willingly, although it should be noted that he was never given a choice in the end. It is likely that being taken has left him in a compromising situation due to this association.”

Tsukauchi presses for the next picture and Mina startles, inhaling sharply as a picture of Katsuki appeared on the screen, her eyes widening.

He’s clearly asleep in the photo and from the wrap on his leg it was likely taken after he and Hagakure had gotten stuck beneath the crumbling building after the mishap during Hero Training.

Pale with dusty blond spikes and long lashes shut over his crimson eyes. Her best friend.

And there, for all the Heroes to see, the gnarly wrap of purple burn scars that circled around his body in broad thick patches – nearly identical to Dabi’s own.

“Aaah.” Hawks rubs at the back of his head, smile never faltering. “That is a problem,” he acknowledges, eyes lingering. “Dabi was the one with the fire quirk, right?” he muses thoughtfully.

“Yes,” Tsukauchi agrees. “Bakugou-san was, reportedly, distressed at

the two of them having chosen to become Villains. Whatever their relationship is it is not necessarily antagonistic in nature despite evidence pointing to a somewhat... volatile background.”

“That,” Edgeshot says with a dip in his brow. “Does not look like a friendly one.”

“No.” Tsukauchi’s lips thin, giving the photo a brief unreadable look before looking to Aizawa-sensei. “Thoughts, Eraserhead?”

“I spoke with Bakugou’s parents,” Aizawa-sensei says in a rough voice. “Eight years ago Bakugou had a near death experience that completely warped his personality. He was diagnosed with depression, PTSD, anxiety and dissociative identity disorder following it. It is still something he struggles with, notable in an inability to relate to his peers and he has a sore spot a mile wide when it comes to touch, among other things.” He drags a hand through his hair. “He has a history of getting into trouble, often coming home scraped and bruised though his parents knew nothing about the burn scars.”

Mina catches Best Jeanist’s eyes turn sharply to Aizawa-sensei.

“You sure the kid’s Hero material?” Hawks asks with a cock of his head. “Sounds like it could compromise him in the wrong situation.”

“He has never once allowed it to get in the way on the field. From my observations he’s become quite adapt at compartmentalising and he still has time to figure things out. He is young and he is not beyond hope. If he wants to become a Hero then that is well within his right.” Aizawa-sensei’s voice sharpens at the end, hair rustling as he looks to the Number Three Hero.

Hawks raises his hands. “Hey, I’ve never met the kid – I’m just making conversation.”

“That is not all there is to it, is it?” Edgeshot observes with a lingering look at Aizawa-sensei. “I cannot help but wonder why All Might isn’t here when he is a teacher of Bakugou-san as well.”

“That-“ Mina takes a step forward, refusing to falter under the gaze of the Heroes when they all look to her. “That’s because he’s afraid of him. Of All Might.”

Hawks looks for a second like he’s about to laugh and Mina’s fingers curls at her side, ready to snap back at him-

But Best Jeanist lets out a rough sigh. "The Sports Festival."

"Yes," Aizawa-sensei agrees, inclining his head, looking so tired that Mina itches to push him into a chair.

"A low moment for U.A.," Edgeshot says with a brief dip of his mouth. "Chaining one of their own students up..."

Mina is almost ready to make him her new favourite Hero on those words alone, chest swelling with a relief that *someone* understood that it hadn't been alright, that Katsuki hadn't been okay in the aftermath of it.

"It was," Aizawa-sensei agrees bluntly. "And we made an error of judgement again when we allowed All Might to go up against Bakugou in the final exam."

"How so?" Hawks asks, one leg swinging idly. "I heard about it, sounds pretty crafty to me to put them up against real-life Heroes. All Might—"

"Beat Bakugou unconscious," Aizawa-sensei interrupts, stepping forward and bending past Tsukauchi to press for the next picture.

Katsuki appears, his body bruised nearly black with violence, more than one rib jutting strangely beneath the mess of old burn scars, his arm limp and nearly blown to bits at his side, nearly all of the fingers broken and twisted.

One of his feet is missing a shoe, the toes bent and skin charred in places. There's scratches and entire patches where skin had scraped clean off. Hand sized bruises dark on his upper arms, dipping down from the crown of his head, one eye swollen completely shut in the bruised side of his face. Nose broken, his jaw dislocated, gums bared in a bloody grimace.

Mina's chest twists harshly at the picture clear proof of what her friend had suffered and finds herself unable to look for long, teeth sinking hard into the skin on the inside of her cheek as she turns to the Heroes instead.

For the first time since the meeting Hawks face twitches, smile dimming.

Best Jeanist straightens up and Mina catches a brief flash of devastation in his eyes as he looks at the picture of her friend. "That..."

a school exam?" he demands.

Scratch that, Best Jeanist is her new favourite Hero, Mina decides, eying him.

Hawks wings lowers behind him. "That is some excessive force of violence to use on a teenager," he observes, eyes lingering before looking to Aizawa-sensei. "So, basically, All Might is compromised in this matter? Never thought I'd see the day."

"Has he given a reason for it?" Edgeshot asks as Tsukauchi gives a cough and presses down on the computer, pictures fading away.

"None that we can discuss here," Aizawa-sensei says, mouth thinning. "What we can draw from this is that Bakugou is compromised from both sides in the matter – both in his relation to Heroes and now these two Villains who he's already acquainted with. He might not be in a right state of mind to make a good judgement call."

"Which is why you need someone who is not All Might to make first contact with him," Edgeshot says with a shift of his feet. "It's a sound idea but we're strangers to him."

"There's no telling what will happen once you get there," Tsukauchi says, drawing the Heroes attention to him. "But ideally anyone who isn't All Might or Endeavour is our best shot here."

"What, the kid's got a problem with Endeavour too?" Hawks sounds, if possibly, affronted by the very idea.

"None that I know of," Tsukauchi soothes. "But he's not the most... approachable."

"He is rather grumpy," Hawks agrees with a twitch of his wings.

"Knowing Endeavour he'll likely be caught up in the middle of things anyway," Aizawa-sensei says drily. "He and All Might are the heavy-hitters here and with Dabi on the scene another fire use would be ideal in dealing with him."

Hawks relaxes back. "True," he says, leather gloved hands raising to rub thoughtfully at his chin. "Honestly, I'm not sure what good I'll be trying to talk down a volatile kid but if I see him I'll do my best. If anything, I might be able to get him far away from the mess of things, at least." He stretches out his wings with a flash of his teeth, feathers bright and eye-catching behind him.

Aizawa-sensei turns to Best Jeanist. "You are familiar with Bakugou already since he did his interning at your Agency."

"I am," Best Jeanist agrees, hand reaching up to smooth down the fringe of his hair. "The information does complicate the matter but Bakugou didn't strike me at the sort to roll over to the whims of others. He made a decision to become a Hero, it's just a matter of reminding him why."

Hawks raises a hand up with a little wave. "That said." He turns to Mina. "Why are you here?"

"Katsuki is my best friend," Mina answers immediately, straightening up. "If anyone has a right to be here it's me."

"Sometimes," Tsukauchi says with a warm smile. "All we need is good friend when we're feeling a bit lost."

Mina clenches her hands into fists.

I just hope we're not too late, she thinks as she looks to the setting sun outside the large windows.

-

Katsuki elbows Dabi when he reaches to steal the cigarette from her lips, huffing when he only drew her tighter with the arm looped around her, slouching down to put more of his weight on her.

"You're heavy," she grumbles as he inhales.

"You're huggable," Dabi tells her around the smoke as he breathes out, hand curling down to press the cigarette to her mouth.

Katsuki bites down on the butt of it, turning her head with a small huff.

On the horizon the sun is setting, slowly disappearing behind the tall buildings.

"What are you going to do?" Dabi murmurs, the hand on her waist dipping to disappear up the hem of her shirt to rest flat against her belly. "It's only a matter of time before the Heroes arrive now."

"Me?" Katsuki turns her head to look up at him, removing the cigarette with her thumb and index finger. "There's a chance Endeavour is going to be there, you know. On a scale from one to ten,

how fucking likely are you to do something stupid?”

“Very,” Dabi admits, mouth curling and the metal in his cheeks glinting.

Katsuki’s mouth thins.

“There’s something going on here, Dabi, and I don’t fucking *like it*. Shigaraki already made a disaster of USJ and then he fucked-up again at Hosu. He’s an idiot but he’s not a fucking *idiot*, he’s far too sure for man who’s faced defeat time and time again.” She gives him a hard look. “I might be playing live bait for the Heroes but there’s something else at play here, or rather *someone else*.”

Someone with enough confidence to believe themselves capable of taking on All Might.

Katsuki thinks of the sound of her flesh splitting, the crack of her ribs as they broke, the ruin of her arm as she choked on blood in his grip, struggling, fighting, nothing short of useless in the face of the sheer terrifying power of the Number One Hero.

And she thinks of someone capable of standing on even footing with him, someone who wanted to see the world crumble at their fingers.

Would it survive such a thing?

Something stretches deep and yawning inside of her, something wretched and useless alike, like claws jagged and desperate against her heart.

Would I?

“There is,” Dabi agrees, thumb brushing absently over a scar just above her belly button. “Perhaps if you agree to join I’ll tell you what I know,” he entices with a lidded look at her.

Katsuki scoffs.

“Yeah, no, I’m sticking to what I said. I think you’re all unbelievable idiotic for even *thinking* about it.”

“So stubborn,” Dabi sighs, palm flattening, pulling her closer.

“Honestly.” Katsuki gives him a look. “What’s the long-term goal here because I’m not fucking seeing one. The Leader of this inane plan kills All Might, you kill Endeavour, the world will fucking *hate you*. And

then what will you do? Spend the rest of your life at the will and whims of whoever managed to off the Number One Hero?" She flicks the butt of the cigarette to the ground and curls her hand around his wrist. "I went up against All Might and I didn't stand a fucking *chance*. I came out looking like fucking patch-work. If he wanted to he could have killed me flat in *seconds*. That kind of power? It's not fucking normal. It's not *right*. And you're as good as saying that there's someone who might measure against it?" Her fingers dig into his wrist. "It fucking *terrifies me*, Dabi."

He stills behind her.

"*All Might* terrifies me and I fucking know he's not in the habit of killing teenagers, even those he doesn't like, for ever fucking reason I did to *deserve that*. This unknown? Someone with the same kind of fucked up power?" Katsuki breathes out roughly. "I've already died once, Dabi, and I didn't enjoy it one fucking bit."

"You're not going to die," Dabi says, grip tightening. "I wouldn't-"

"What?" Katsuki gives him a tired look. "Allow it? Face it, Dabi. I'm easily discarded in whatever game is at play here. Very fucking expandable, actually. You can't promise me *jack shit* because you wouldn't stand a damn chance anyway."

She leans back against him, sinking into his embrace with a tug at his arms which he takes a hint at, slowly, and a bit haltingly, wrapping around her.

"You're not going to die," Dabi repeats, resting his chin on top of her head, and if he's looking to reassure her it's really not fucking working.

Katsuki wakes up in a world that terrifies her.

And it never fucking *stops*.

Katsuki wonders if she should start counting her days as she squeezes her eyes shut, feeling cold even with Dabi's unnatural warmth pressing against her back.

Chapter End Notes

I'm a filthy liar.

I've chugged like three Monsters to finish this up but I got so

wrapped up in the fact that I was going to write Mina again that I just couldn't leave it be.

I've missed her. I really, really have.

Mina is really in the middle of things and we're going to slide back to her once more before the rescue arc kicks off because there's *something* that's been a long time coming.

And I finally got to bring in Hawks! Another favorite of mine. I really want to write more with him, might do it in a future project because I'm pretty weak when it comes to his character.

The League of Villains arc has really turned longer and more in-depth than I originally planned but I'm having tons of fun with it and I'm really enjoying your speculations in the comments.

That said I'm gonna take a nap because editing this up stole the last of my energy but I'm hoping to return and respond to some of you very soon because you make me all soft and warm and endlessly happy. Thank you for the well wishes <3

I'm artsy-death on tumblr and this has been chapter 26 of In The End.

I hope you enjoyed!

Guilt

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

”So, how exactly did you die?”

Katsuki catches the juggling ball she’d stolen from Compress room against his exact wishes to *knock*.

As if she was willingly going to subject herself to more of his company than necessary – she got enough of him during meals with his underhand little pokes for information. She rather thought he found amusement in her less than poignant responses.

She turns to give Dabi a blank look where he lies sprawled out on the couch.

“Because I’ve been thinking about it,” Dabi says, fingers tapping absently against the cover of the book on his chest. “And twenty-two is an awfully young age to die and you said it didn't end on your terms.”

Katsuki’s mouth thins, breathing out as she turned her attention back to the ceiling.

“I was murdered,” she tells him bluntly.

Trust is a horrible thing and Katsuki allows herself few allowances of it and it’s always compromised. She had paid the ultimate price once; choking, drowning, cold and lonely, betrayed by her best friend and lover.

Someone she had known for years and trusted implicitly.

“He left me to die on the street,” she says, fingers touching against her throat. “Never saw it coming.”

“You knew him,” Dabi says and her mouth twists because he’s always been sharp.

“Yes,” she admits.

“And he killed you.”

“And he killed me,” she agrees.

“Why?” Dabi presses.

“I don’t know.” Katsuki huffs out a harsh breath. “We broke up when I was twenty-one and I thought... I don’t think he ever got over it. Wanted to keep me all for himself, I suppose. But I don’t know, there was never time to ask.”

Katsuki remembers the rain falling above them, his face hunched above hers, shielding her from the worst of it as he bent forward to press his cold lips against hers.

“I’m sorry.”

“That’s fucked up.” Dabi pushes himself up and his feet hits the ground before he leant forward to rest his elbows on his knees. “You loved him?”

“Once,” Katsuki hums. “We met at an apple orchard of all things. Young, idealistic, no real direction in life, ya know? He was... a good man. Or so I thought, I guess. He taught himself to sign because he wanted to tell his bad jokes. I was a fairly competent lip reader before that, took him some time to realize I hadn’t been laughing at his jokes because they were *bad* not because I didn’t understand them.”

She had been amused by the way he had stubbornly proclaimed that he’d find a joke that would make her laugh, all huffy and clumsy in his signing, frustration clear in his face. He’d been two years younger than her, a scruffy sixteen-year-old who had bailed from a broken home in search of something better.

And he’d found *her*, Katsuki supposes.

“You sound like you miss him,” Dabi points out with a tilt of his head and Katsuki doesn’t quite know what to make of the look in his eyes.

“I’m not *her*,” Katsuki says with a grimace. “I have... both of their memories, the boy’s and the woman’s, but I’m not either of them, not truly. It’s fucking hard to explain but... he belonged to her and she died loving him, and it feels shitty to just dismiss that it *was*. She paid for it, ultimately, and I *hate him* but she loved him.” She huffs. “It sounds fucking *insane*.”

“It does,” Dabi agrees, the asshole. “You speak as if you were her but you insist you aren’t.”

“They are me and they’re *not*,” Katsuki struggles to explain it and ultimate gives up on it with a harsh breath. “I don’t fucking know. It’s just... messy.”

“That does sound like you.” Dabi smirks and she bares her teeth at him, unamused. “What was her name? The woman’s.”

“Does it matter?” Katsuki gives him a half-curious look, a strange tug in her chest.

“No,” Dabi says, pushing up to his feet. “You like the name you have now?”

“Katsuki? Yeah.” She watches him with a small furrow in her brow. “It’s who I am.”

“Good,” Dabi murmurs, one knee pressing down against the bed before he leant forward to slant his lips against hers.

Long fingers tangles into her hair with a tug back as she parted for him, her eyes closing with a low groan as his tongue stroked up against her, devouring her with that heady contrasting feeling of roughness and softness.

Katsuki likes kissing Dabi – it’s such a simple thing but she rather thinks she’ll never tire of it.

-

Mina drags a flailing Midoriya behind her, glancing twice to make sure not one of the Heroes had caught sight of them before shoving him into the room she’d been staying at and kicking the door shut behind her.

“What are you doing here?” Mina hisses out, clamping down at her fury as she folds her arms and gives him a firm look.

She’d caught him skulking after All Might who was either oblivious or pretending not to notice his shadow and Mina is *not having it*.

You have no right to be here, she thinks with fingers that sink hard into her arm as he gives her a visibly distressed look.

Midoriya looks... bad, Mina admits to herself. She hasn’t seen him since the summer camp fiasco but she swears he’s actually lost weight since then, the shadows beneath his eyes dark and there’s a sallow sort

of paleness to his skin that makes him look downright sickly.

She pushes down at any sort of sympathy, firming her mouth.

“I’m-“ He gasps, rubbing his hand through his hair and visibly giving himself a shake as he looks up at her. “All Might told me that they know where Kacchan is. That – that they’re going after him tomorrow and I-“

“You,” Mina interrupts. “Are not doing *anything*.”

Midoriya actually recoils before he seems to find himself, straightening out.

“I need to do something,” he tells her, taking a step forward. “If you were his friend you’d understand that Kacchan – he needs *help*! He needs-“

“The best Heroes this world has to offer,” Mina cuts him off, all sympathy officially squashed as she glowers at him. “What do you think you can do, really?” she demands of him. “Your quirk is hardly the kind to go under the radar, the Villains will know you’re there in two second flat and then you’ll ruin whatever chance I have of getting him back!”

It’s a lesson hard-swallowed but Mina knows that her friends needs more than she can offer and she knows her quirk is all but useless in this situation.

She has never wished more in her life that she had a quirk like Hagakure, something that would allow her to just go by *unseen*.

But that’s not what she has and Aizawa is sympathetic but firm when he practically grinds into her mind how absolutely *stupid* it would be to interfere here.

“Don’t you think I hate this!?” she snaps, taking a step forward. “It’s always you, you, *you* when it comes down to it but Katsuki isn’t *yours*-“

“But he was!” Midoriya practically gasps. “My entire *life* I’ve looked up to him! I wanted to be just like him – just as brave, just as confident, I even wanted his *quirk*. We were best friends before- for the longest time everyone thought I was quirkless you know?” Midoriya switches tracks half-way through the sentence and Mina furrows her brows. “Even Kacchan – I *hated* it. That day on the bridge,

I can't stop thinking *what if I wanted it to happen?*" Midoriya buries his hands into his hair. "It's my fault, it's all my *fault* and he just – there was so much blood and he *changed* after it, you know, *he changed because of me* and I just – I."

Midoriya digs his hands into his hair and takes two steps back before sinking down roughly on the chair there.

"I was- I was jealous of you, you know?" Midoriya admits, and it's as if he can't *stop*, the words bubbling and spilling over as Mina stares at him. "I wanted – for the longest of time I've wanted what you have. To have Kacchan- I just wanted him to look at me and *see me*. I finally had my quirk but I'm – it's like I was just as invisible as I've always been and I *hated it*. It was even worse than the bullying because at least – at least he was *looking at me* but now there's just-"

He gestures a bit helplessly, looking nothing short of incredibly lost.

"I know he doesn't like me, I know we aren't friends anymore, but I can't stop thinking *what if*. And I can't stop thinking about everything – everything I've said, you know? And – I've been thinking, I've done nothing *but think* this entire week and about the exam and-" He hiccups. "And it's my fault, Ashido-san. *It's all my fault*. With All Might and – Kacchan he said, he said that I had to get over my Hero worship and just – he was so messed up after the exam and I'm just-"

"Midoriya." His head snaps up. "*Breathe.*"

He draws a desperate sort of breath, chokes on it, and then tries again and again as Mina takes a step forward.

"Have you... spoken to anyone about the way you feel about him?" she asks, not sure where to even *begin* as she looks at him.

Midoriya hesitates but- "I spoke to All Might – about some of it," he admits, looking honestly miserable about it. "I think- I realize that I probably shouldn't have because- because All Might he hasn't-" Midoriya draws a large breath. "He hasn't been entirely fair to Kacchan, has he?" he says in a small voice and it looks like it honestly *pains him* to admit to it.

"No," Mina agrees and Midoriya flinches. "He hasn't."

Mina has seen the way Midoriya looks at All Might with naked adoration and she wonders what it must have taken him to come to this realization and then actually *acknowledge it*.

"I'm sorry." Mina blinks at him. "I'm – I truly am." Midoriya hunches on himself. "I feel like I've made a mess of things," he admits.

"I'm gonna be honest with you here Midoriya because you probably *have*." She grimaces a bit to herself as he shrinks. "But frankly, someone should have – I don't know, spoken to you about this? Because it sounds like you've been bottling this up for a long time."

Midoriya draws a shaky hand through his hair with a weak laugh. "There wasn't – Mom she *tries* you know? But she... she didn't like talking about it. When we – when we thought I was quirkless it was like, if she just pretended everything was alright it *would be*. And then with Kacchan – it was just the same thing again and I *tried* to move on, to pretend with her, but there was always that stupid feeling of *what if*. I can't - it's like I can't *shut it off*."

So much is clear, Mina thinks with a curl of her mouth.

"All Might he said – he just kept telling to keep my chin up, that everything would be alright, that he'd try- that he'd try to *talk to him*. And that's – that's what I wanted to hear but I think he just... misunderstood everything. And I didn't realize it until after the exam because Kacchan – he's never been *jealous* of me and it wasn't – he never said anything about *blaming me* and I *know that*. But I *blamed myself* and- it all just tangled together. Became *wrong*."

Mina closes her eyes, grasping for patience but finding none.

"Stay here," she says abruptly and Midoriya's head jerks up just as she slams the door in his face.

Mina flexes her fingers as she prowls down the corridor, torn between hitting something and just-

She needs an adult. This is just so far above her and Midoriya – Mina needs to make sure he knows to *stay put* because she doesn't trust him not to do anything stupid after spewing all of that at her and Mina just-

She doesn't understand how everything could have gone so *wrong*. Can't stop thinking that if *someone* had just bothered to *talk* with Midoriya properly after the accident then maybe-

Maybe things wouldn't have gone so wrong between her best friend and All Might.

She shouldn't be furious at Midoriya because *someone* should have realized that he was blaming himself for the accident (even *Katsuki* had said it was an accident and that – if anything – Mina trusts) and not allowed it to *fester*.

Because Mina has seen Midoriya, has seen the way he obsesses, rambling on and on about the quirks of famous Heroes with a feverish sort of adoration in his gaze.

He'd looked at Katsuki the same way – the same desperate sort of *want*.

Something curls in her chest, deep dark and desperately possessive, because Katsuki is *her* best friend and it feels like everyone is trying to take him away from her, to claim him for themselves.

First Dabi and Toga and the League of Villains and now Midoriya and Mina-

Mina just wants her friend back.

She pushes into the large meeting room, reaching out and latching onto Aizawa-sensei who grunts in surprise, dark eyes turning down to look at her as she firms her mouth.

"Midoriya is in my room," she says in a low voice after making sure the only one near them were Detective Tsukauchi who politely excuses himself after a look from her teacher. "He's – he needs someone to talk to that isn't me because I really, really feel like hitting him right now."

"Of course he's here," Aizawa sighs, dragging a tired hand through his hair. "I take it he followed All Might?"

Mina gives a terse nod.

"Will you be alright on your own for a while? If you need to sleep you know where my room is."

"I do," Mina agrees because they'd been crashing here for a week now – it was easier and safer than commuting back and forth. "I'm gonna go bother Best Jeanist," she declares, stepping back from him.

Aizawa's mouth quirks up. "I think he actually enjoys your company."

"Of course he does," Mina agrees. "I'm a wonder."

-

“What are you, a fucking leech?” Katsuki growls, pushing her palm against Himiko’s forehead. “*Behave.*”

“Be a good mutt, wackjob,” Dabi drawls, sorting through his cards. He’s on the floor, leaning back against the couch, a cardboard box turned upside down between the three of them with a bottle of whisky and a pile of cards.

“You’re just jealous I got to taste Kasu-chan first,” Himiko pouts at him.

“He *does* taste good, doesn’t he?” Dabi says with a gleam in his eyes as he slid two cards face down on the table.

Katsuki twitches.

Himiko gives him a *very* interested look before snapping around to look at Katsuki. “Progressing fast here, are we Kasu-chan?” she leers.

“Fuck off,” Katsuki mutters, slamming four cards down.

“So stingy,” Himiko giggles. “I bet he has the *cutest* face when he comes.” She presses her hands against her cheeks, pink spreading across them. “He was so fierce when he bled all over me – you should have *seen him.*”

Katsuki ducks her head as Dabi raises his brow at her, the tips of her ears growing warm. “It’s your turn, Himiko,” she grouches.

“Mou, you should call me Himiko-*chan*,” she complains but obligingly forks out a single card with a little flourish of her hand. “Or Himiko-*nee-chan.*”

“In your fucking dreams,” Katsuki says flatly.

“You should tell her,” Dabi drawls as he sorts their cards aside and deals them new ones.

Himiko takes a moment peering intently at the single card he flashes her before shaking her head and he slides her a card face down before picking up his own.

Katsuki’s mouth thins and Himiko peers curiously between the both of them before focusing on her.

“Are you keeping *secrets*, Kasu-chan?” Himiko wonders with a tilt of her hand, one hand sliding down towards her boot and the knife handle sticking out there.

Dabi snatches it out before her fingers can curl around it, stabbing it into the couch behind him to a brief narrowing of yellow eyes.

Himiko’s mouth opens-

“I’m a woman,” Katsuki grumbles and Himiko’s mouth snaps shut, her body jerking towards Katsuki with wide-eyes. “And I’m not *sixteen*, I’m fucking thirty.” She gives her cards a brief despairing look before looking up to the other girl. “I died,” she says flatly. “And then I woke up in this body. Hell if I know the why or how but I *did*. Do with that what you will.”

Himiko blinks at her and then leans forward to give her an intent look, eyes searching.

“You’re telling the truth,” she says after a long moment, a note of wonder in her voice. “Was that, like, your quirk of something?” Himiko wonders, fingers reaching up to press against Katsuki’s mouth.

“There were no quirks in my old world,” Katsuki mumbles against the fingers pressing down against her lips.

“Maybe you were the first?” Himiko suggests, drawing her hand back and then perks up, swivelling around to Dabi as he tilts his glass back to swallow a mouthful of whisky. “You’re dating a *cougar*.”

Katsuki nearly drops her cards. “For fucks sake, I’m only *thirty* and he’s twenty-“ She pauses, realizing a bit awkwardly that she has no idea, and turning to give him a suspicious look.

“Twenty-five,” Dabi drawls. “It’s pretty hot though, isn’t it?” he says, clearly pleased.

“It means I’m the youngest,” Himiko pouts and something inside of Katsuki relaxes.

Dabi gives her an insufferable knowing look with a smirk that pulls at the metal in his cheeks and she flips him her middle-finger.

It’s strange, Katsuki thinks, how easily things falls for her with these two.

She listens to the ribbing, the *teasing*, really, between the two of them as she folds her cards, rubbing at the back of her neck as she gazes towards the boarded up window of her room.

It's so very easy to forget how unkind the world truly is when she is with them.

Mina... gentles something inside of her, Katsuki recognises that in how it's so very easy to relax into Dabi's arms when he finds her in the forest.

Breathing the scent of him, allowing the stability and sanity he offers in a way she never does before.

There's a part of her that wants to stay here, hidden away from the reality of the world.

But Katsuki knows that good things aren't meant to last.

And there's a price to pay for everything.

Chapter End Notes

Apparently we hit 100k words with the last chapter. I feel like I should be celebrating but I'll honestly take ten minutes without coughing my lungs out.

But here we are! And this chapter was a long time coming. But we've started unrolling some of the hot mess that Midoriya is because honestly, his mother tries, and I love Inko, but she did not handle the whole quirkless issue well. Midoriya just lacks a good supportive network before U.A. and that is a problem.

In canon it means he got bullied, pretty severely, by Bakugou, without anyone stepping in. Here things were allowed to grow and fester for him instead and he feels directly responsible for what happened. It is something he needs help with coming to terms with because he does have a tendency to shoulder things on his own and it will cost him severely in the long run if he doesn't learn how to deal with it.

Since there's been a week since Katsuki's kidnapping and he does not have access to the rescue plan things have gone a bit... south for him.

Katsuki herself is about to find herself in a very unpleasant seat

very soon as we hit the the rescue arc chapters and, woof. Hold on tight, my friends.

Thank you for your absolutely wonderful comments < 3 I've managed to respond to a decent amount of them, slowly catching up, but this cold has really tanked my energy you guys. But I adore you, I do.

I'm artsy-death on tumblr if you're about there and this has been chapter 27 of In The End.

I hope you enjoyed!

Unravelling

Chapter Notes

If you want to read the actual smut that that happens between chapter 27 and 28 just take a trip to the second part of this serie: *In The End (We Burn Hot)*

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Katsuki *aches*.

It's a... good sort of ache. *Different* but *good*.

Proof that she could receive pleasure in this body, that she could take for herself, that she is allowed to *want*.

Perhaps it's a bit childish, the vindication she feels at the acceptance from Dabi, but it's there none the less. The one person who had always met her at equal footing, who didn't hesitate to press his lips to hers with the realization of what she is.

It's a strange sort of giddy feeling that spreads through her chest, freeing in its simplicity.

She presses her nose into his neck, breathes him in, allowing the soothing scent of sulphur to fill her up with expanding of her lungs.

Her lungs. Her body. Her pleasure.

There are dark bruises on her neck where Dabi had laid his claim for the world to see, marks where his teeth had dug into her flesh as he pressed into her with a groan of her name that had echoed down to her very bones.

Katsuki still isn't sure what had been more overwhelming – the feel of being claimed or doing the claiming as he showed her how to work his body open for her use.

Her cock twitches at the reminder, despite how spent she already is.

Katsuki swallows the words she desperately wants to tell him as she angles her head and presses her ear down to listen to the wet *thump thump* of his beating heart.

“You’re *mine*,” she growls quietly, possessive and desperate to keep what they have.

The hand resting on her hip twitches before smoothing gently over the first scar he’d left on her body.

“Go to sleep,” Dabi murmurs, voice thick with sleep.

But he doesn’t deny it.

-

Katsuki knows she’s run out of time when she opens her door and finds Kurogiri on the other side of it.

His misty body fluctuates and writhes and she stills when she recognises the clamp of metal in his hand. Cuffs made to prevent the use of quirks like hers – the same sort that had bit into her skin at the Sports Festival.

“Can I... put my hoodie on first?” Katsuki asks, dragging a hand through her hair. “... And maybe some pants?”

“Yes,” Kurogiri allows but when she steps back he follows her and Katsuki’s neck prickles uncomfortably as she bends down and snatches up her jeans.

It’s the same ones she’d worn on her kidnapping and there’s a dried fleck of chocolate near one of the knees which she digs her nail into before pulling them on. The hoodie she draws on next is Dabi’s, a dark blue one that still smells of him, and she takes some comfort in that as she pulls on her socks before sliding her feet into her boots.

Katsuki draws a careful breath before turning around and holding out her hands to Kurogiri, refusing to meet his gaze as the metal sealed shut with a twist and weight that pulls at her shoulders when he let go of them.

She flexes her fingers inside it, knowing that the backlash of using her quirk would likely blow off her hands if she attempted anything.

Watches with hooded eyes as he slips the key into his pocket.

“You have behaved yourself admirable during your stay.” Kurogiri’s voice is low, his words clearly meant only for the two of them. “Keep your head down and you might make it out alive yet.”

Katsuki's mouth pulls into a thin smile. "It's like you don't even know me."

She rolls her shoulders, squares them tight as steps out and follows him down the stairs to the bar.

All of of the Villains are already there, armed and ready, unsurprisingly.

Shigaraki is half-slumped with his back to the bar beside a small television with a shimmering black and white screen, the hand on his face hiding any sort of impression.

Twice is fiddling with the straps of the chair in the middle of the room and Katsuki feels something cold slither down her spine at the sight of it.

"Kasu-chan!" Himiko makes a move towards her but Mr Compress grasps the back of her sweater and pulls her back, side-stepping the stab of a knife that follows just a second later to a sharp glower from yellow eyes.

"Now, now, Himiko-chan, precautions needs to be taken, you understand?" he says, the mask on his face making it impossible to tell what he was thinking.

Katsuki finds Dabi seated on one of the chair, leaning forward with his hands clasped in front of his face, eyes impossible to read as she briefly meets his gaze.

"Katsuki," Shigaraki murmurs, drawing her attention back to him. "I wish to hear your answer."

Katsuki rolls her neck. "I suspect you already know my answer." She lifts her hands and the metal clamped tight there. "But, yeah, it's a fucking *no* from me."

"You are a particularly stubborn soul," Shigaraki sighs, one hand waving towards the chair. "It's nothing personal." A single red eye glint from the corner of a severed hand. "I hope you understand?"

And Katsuki knows how fucking outmatched she is. Knows that there is absolutely nothing that will prevent her from getting strapped into that chair, no argument, no words, *nothing*.

Nothing but her agreement to join them and that is the one thing she

cannot give.

Katsuki takes the step forward before anyone can touch her, can *make her*, and sprawls back into the wooden chair with as much dignity she can cling to even as her back goes rigid with tension.

“Nothing personal,” she repeats as Twice bends down, looping the straps in place as Shigaraki pushes off his chair and steps to the middle of the room in that looping strange gait he had.

“The Heroes are coming,” he says, anticipation thick in his voice. “All Might will be leading the charge. They’ve managed to gather together quite the force for our dear Katsuki here. It seems like they’re quite *anxious* about getting you back.” A red eye lingers on her for just a moment before sliding away. “It’s too bad, really, that it won’t be quite so easy for them. The Noumu have already been dispatched and they’re awaiting your orders.”

Katsuki clenches her teeth, heart thudding loud in her chest as Twice pulls the last strap tight.

“Sorry, kid,” he murmurs and she jerks, realising that she was allowing her discomfort to show and curling her hands tight inside their metal prison. The sickly scent of her quirk is already stinging uncomfortably at her nose, her shoulders drawn tight, and there’s an ugly sort of twist inside her chest as she lowers her head, refusing to look at any of them.

“This day,” Shigaraki says with a feverish sort of gleam as he spreads his hands. “Will forever be remembered as the one on which All Might dies!”

“I still say you’re fucking idiots,” Katsuki breathes out, scraping her nails against the metal to anchor herself to the here and now.

“Yes, you’ve been very... vocal about your thoughts on the matter.” Shigaraki tilts his head. “In this society which has shackles us with its rules you’d think that someone just as oppressed would be sympathetic to our plight.” His lips spread. “Take some comfort in that we’re not the sort to silence those who disagree.”

Katsuki stiffens at the jab, well aware of the scars at the corners of her mouth where metal had bit deep at the Sports Festival.

She bares her teeth.

“It’s curious, how you take his side, despite everything,” Shigaraki hums. “I wonder, will you celebrate or will you mourn with the rest of the world when he falls?”

“Shigaraki – the boy, he knows something about All Might that could be of help to us,” Mr Compress says before Katsuki can open her mouth and tell him just where to stuff it.

She tenses warily, aware of Dabi shifting in the background as Shigaraki takes a step towards her, eyes suddenly intent.

“Something that can help?” he almost whispers, desire deep in his voice as he looks at her. “Something you discovered when you fought him, perhaps? A *weakness*?”

“If you’re so fucking sure of this plan,” Katsuki growls. “You hardly need me to help you out, do ya?”

Shigaraki tilts his head. “So you *do* know something.”

“Hell if I’m telling *you*,” Katsuki breathes in an undertone.

“He’s remained stubbornly silent on the matter,” Compress says with a theatrical sigh, fingers pressing against his mask with a shake of his head “But perhaps with the right *incentive*...?”

Katsuki presses warily against the wood as Shigaraki leans down to peer at her past the decapitated hand, tensing as his fingers pressed up against the corner of her mouth, framing her face in a four-fingered grip, thumb hovering just beneath her chin.

She meets his gaze with a glower, heart pounding hard inside her chest.

“Why do you protect him still?” Shigaraki murmurs. “I do not wish you hurt you, Katsuki. Your stay here has been, dare I say it, *enjoyable*. You fit so well with us here and it frustrates me that you deny your true nature still.”

“My true nature?” Katsuki scoffs. “I assure you *Villainy* has never been a part of things.”

“Oh?” Shigaraki’s mouth curls. “Not even in your *past life*, Katsuki-*chan*?”

Katsuki *flinches*, eyes widening with alarm as his smile grows.

“Did you really believe we’d allow you to room freely inside these walls without a way to keep an eye on you? Oh it was a curious discovery to make, to realize that you’re more than you are. A thirty-year-old woman trapped in the body of a sixteen-year-old boy? What a *miserable existence* you lead.”

Katsuki jerks forward in her bounds with a snarl and only Shigaraki’s tightening grip keep her from activating his quirk.

“That has nothing to do with *anything*!”

Shigaraki releases her with a laugh that sends ice down her spine. “Oh, quite the opposite! What do you think the Heroes will say once they realise they’re risking life and limb for a *thief* and *murderer*?” He spreads his hands out, red eye glittering. “I believe they’ll be quite disappointed with you.”

Katsuki strains forward, eyes glowing and lips pulled back to reveal sharp teeth. “I’m not a fucking *murderer*!”

“No?” Shigaraki presses. “So you didn’t kill the boy and take his body for your own use? Playing *pretend* in his place? And, oh, his parents have *no idea* do they?” His teeth glitters in the wide spread of his smile. “Really, it’s nothing short of *Villainous*, wouldn’t you agree?”

Katsuki stares at him, a dull mute sort of buzz in her ears and an uncomfortable twist in her chest.

“Nothing to say?” Shigaraki mocks. “How... dull.”

“Shigaraki... leave her alone.” Dabi’s voice rings out heavy through the room.

You’re not helping, idiot, Katsuki thinks very loudly as she looks to him, hoping he reads just much she does *not* appreciates him stepping in.

He gives her a strange look back, turquoise eyes lidded and dark.

“Be quiet, Dabi.” Shigaraki cranes his head towards him. “I’m well aware you’re compromised when it comes to our dear Katsuki-chan. But I don’t hold it against you. She is quite the interesting case, isn’t she? Almost had me falling right into her hands with that *act* of hers.”

“Don’t call me that,” Katsuki heaves out. “So what – I didn’t exactly *chose* it. I fucking died and so did *he*.”

“Excuses!” Shigaraki rounds on her and there’s a feverish sort of light in his eyes that makes her own narrow.

“If you’re so fucking smart then maybe you should listen to me!” Katsuki snarls at him with frustration that worms thick through her. “I was born in a world without quirks, spent twenty-two fucking years in it. We didn’t have Heroes or Villains but it was fucked up all the same! You think getting rid of Heroes will change *anything*? Because I know it won’t! I’ve fucking *seen* it won’t!”

“In what way?” Katsuki jerks around, staring at Compress as he takes a step towards her. “It sounds to me like quite the idealistic society. No quirks, no Heroes, no Villains. What could possibly have been bad about it?”

Katsuki gives him a long measuring look, lips pulling back with a flash of her teeth. “You might not fucking realize it but your quirks? At least they’re connected to one individual who can fucking *die*. In my world we just got super fucking creative in mass murder and armed country after country with fucking nuclear weapons capable of wiping out all life. One push of a single button and all life as we knew it would be erased.” She growls quietly to herself. “Police brutality was common, minority groups getting murdered by the handful while the police responsible got off with a fucking slap on the wrist. And without Heroes and Villains to distract on the televisions we were really fucking busy getting into war over religions, oil, fucking *skin colour*. Humanity will always hate those different and it will always greedily consume for power. It doesn’t *change*.”

It’s one of those things that had really stuck with her upon waking up – that there were no *wars*. Instead of soldiers society was busy pumping out Heroes and it had become everyday life for civilians to call in late for work because a Villain happened to interfere with their commute to work.

Was it better or worse? Katsuki honestly can’t tell. She tallies the lives lost and just gets tired.

“It’s like the evolution of quirks just put a *stop* to the wars here. You’re several years into the future but you’re so fucking backwards when it comes to a lot of things, so reliant on quirks instead of science and development. Society takes enjoyment in the whole fucking Heroes and Villains stint and it’s *distracting* from a shit load of other bad stuff that could have been in its stead.” She raises her head. “So, yeah, I don’t fucking agree with killing All Might. But even if you do there’s

Heroes behind him and maybe you should be really fucking thankful that there *are*.”

“Perhaps you make a good point from your own experiences but the world isn't set in stone. Consider what happens if there's never any change,” Mr Compress says with a spread of his hand but she can't quite place the tone of his voice. “Society *needs* change, otherwise the corruption that already is will only grow with consequences thereafter. There is already people suffering and dying because of the allowances made for Heroes. But today marks the end of their Era and we might just end up proving you wrong.”

Katsuki slumps in her bonds, glowering at him. “Maybe,” she snips, “there's just something fucked up with humanity on the whole and we're doomed to the same fucking hamster wheel, no matter what world we're in.” She turns her head to Shigaraki. “You can try and blackmail me all the fuck you want but I'm not getting myself involved in this. I'm not telling you *shit*.”

“Even if it means the truth of you getting out?” Shigaraki presses, a strange look in his eyes.

“Even so,” Katsuki agrees with a grimace. “I fucking owe them the truth anyway.”

“You don't owe them anything, Kasu-chan!” Himiko protests. “You don't have to go *back* – you could stay right here and no-one would have to know but *us*.”

Katsuki clenches her teeth, turning away from the other girl.

Stiffens when an electronic laugh rings out into the room, her eyes darting towards the television on the bar.

“Oh it's quite the brave soul we have on our hands, isn't there? Don't concern yourself with her, Tomura. All Might will fall today and she'll be instrumental in bringing his end, whether she agrees to help or not.”

“So you're the one who thinks he can kill All Might,” Katsuki growls as she screen flickers before settling on a picture of a man, or rather a head piece with the vague outline of a face in the black metal sticking out of a fine-tailored suit. “And who the fuck are you supposed be? Fucking *Darth Vader*?” she snips as a loud rattling breath registers to her senses. “Whose father are you? Shigaraki's? *Please* don't tell me it's Midoriya's because I couldn't stand the fucking *irony*.”

Hadn't Deku's father bailed when he was, like, a toddler or something? The dead boy's memories are hazy on the matter. She could just imagine how unfunny it was if his his mentor's arch nemesis turned out to be his fucking *father*.

He laughs again, metallic and gritting to her senses. *"I am not related to All Might's little student, I assure you."*

Thank fuck for small mercies, Katsuki thinks with a thinning of her lips.

"I am All For One," he tells her.

Katsuki gives the screen an unamused look. "And I'm King Explosion Murder," she says flatly.

"Oh I know exactly who you are, Bakugou Katsuki. Though I admit myself interested in the exact circumstances behind your existence. Your case is quite... unprecedented. I do not believe there's ever been a quirk that could transfer souls."

"We didn't have *quirks* in my world," Katsuki snaps at him, heart thudding inside her chest.

"There is always a first," All For One rumbles in amusement. *"I find myself looking forward to seeing you in person. I might even be able to shed some light on your existence."*

Katsuki grits her teeth. "Yeah, well, *I don't care.*"

"I think you care more than you want to admit to, child." He shifts, turning to Shigaraki who stills, eyes sharp and attentive. *"Tomura, the Heroes are en-route."* He looks out at the room in large, more than one of the Villains straightening up, a strange heavy feeling of anticipation rising in the air. *"Do not fail me."*

The screen turns black quite abruptly, leaving Katsuki glowering at nothing.

Chapter End Notes

Katsuki is just making friends everywhere, isn't she?

There's going to be some POV switches ahead so be prepared for that because we have three sides to work here to get the full picture of things. Some familiar, some new - I'm gearing myself up mentally because this is going to take quite the turn from

canon.

I can't believe we've hit the Rescue Arc chapters, it feels like just the other day Katsuki first landed herself with our misfit bunch of Villains.

Your comments, as always, are absolutely amazing and I'm pretty much past the worst of my cold so I'm doing my best to catch up to them. You make me absolutely wonderfully warm < 3

I'm artsy-death on tumblr if you're about there and this has been chapter 28 of In The End.

I hope you enjoyed!

Circumambient

Chapter Notes

See Through = Hagakure

Deku = Midoriya

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Katsuki thinks that the most frustrating thing about the entire matter is that she *understands*.

She thinks they're idiots, she's fairly certain not one of them has thought about the long-term repercussions and even less about how it will impact on their own lives, but she understands the *want* and *need* for change even if she's convinced they're doing it completely backwards.

She had once struggled in a society that refused to meet her on even footing. Where she'd been reduced to passing notes to make orders and pressing down videos without captions or, worse, really bad ones, *censored* ones, as if she was a *child*.

Had she not wished desperately for change? Frustrated in a world that would not *hear her*.

Which was a fine fucking irony.

Killing All Might would bring change, whether society wants it or not, because putting a single man on a pedestal in the way it has is nothing short of pure foolishness. Is All Might responsible for it? In a way – he had set out to become the Symbol of Peace but he hadn't prepared for what it would mean once he wasn't around to fulfil the roll.

Arguably he had put it off for so long that he would impact society in one way or the other – he was already struggling to keep up with just their class and had been late to the USJ incident because he'd run his hours down.

Quirkless Deku reappears in her life after eight years with a quirk that strangely echoes All Might and the Number One Hero has a vested interest in him.

Even Katsuki can put one and one together.

But Deku is *sixteen*. There's no time and now there's All For One and Katsuki kinda wants to bury her head in the sand and ignore the reality around her because *what did it mean?* How to they relate to each other? Why had All Might been so desperate to bring Deku into his shoes *now*? And why had she never heard of a man who couldn't possibly have appeared out of fucking *nowhere*?

Katsuki is fucking *suspicious*.

All Might had to be losing his power for a *reason*. He has a weak left-side – an injury? – and here is someone who is so very fucking *certain* he could stand on even footing with the Symbol of Peace himself.

It could be overconfidence, it could be any fucking thing, but Katsuki has a foreboding feeling life isn't about to let her off so easily this time.

And what was the point of following All For One anyway? A man on a television screen, shrouded in mystery and with his own agenda. Were they so fucking desperate to bring the end of All Might that they were willing to bet on the unknown?

Because Katsuki doesn't like that.

She doesn't like *any* of this.

There had to be a better way of doing all of this – Katsuki can't even be exasperated anymore because she's just really fucking *tired*. And she's in so far over her head that it had stopped being funny and she really just want to *get out of these fucking straps because she's so fucking done with being tied up*-

She clenches her teeth, her heart pounding hard inside her chest as she shoves at the panic that *very much* wanted to drag her the fuck under because she'd *known* there were consequences for not trying harder to leave, to sticking it through because she didn't want to leave Dabi and Himiko to screw themselves over.

Katsuki rather wishes someone would just sit down with a whiteboard and think about A and B and the consequences of reaching C.

Because that's not what's happening here.

And she *hates* that everyone is in such a fucking *hurry*. There's no-one playing the long-game here, other than perhaps All For One, and isn't *that* a thought, and Katsuki honestly contemplates if just blowing her

hands off and bailing would be fucking *easier*.

She doesn't want anything to do with him – is not at all happy about his expressed interest in her.

Katsuki glares down at her booted feet, aware of the restlessness anticipation in the air around her but quite unable to give two-fucks.

Heroes rise, Heroes fall, Villains rise, Villains fall.

It feels like the kind of shitty inevitable that someone, quite uncharitably, planted her smack-dab in.

“She’ll be instrumental in bringing his end, whether she wants to or not.”

Because that's what Katsuki needs in her life, a life-time of society breathing down her neck by no fault of her own. It was the opposite of what she'd been trying to accomplish by keeping her mouth shut and it isn't *funny* and Katsuki-

If Katsuki is completely fucking honest with herself she's absolutely, mind-blowingly, *terrified*.

It tangles inside her mind, memories of watching the news, Heroes and Villains, the horrifying reality of war, what if's and prospective changes.

Is all change good change? No. Katsuki knows it isn't, knows that it isn't so easy, knows that there's little to build on ruin and death without it coming back. The world is too invested in All Might to *forgive and forget*. They're not going to tarnish his reputation, he will go down in a blaze of glory and he will fucking *inspire*.

No-one is going to be thanking them for killing the Symbol of Peace and it feels like they're missing something so glaringly obvious that Katsuki doesn't even know where to *begin*.

But she's out of time anyway, isn't she?

The door opens with a bang and Katsuki has to consciously level her breathing as she looks up, frowning at the Villain who steps inside.

“Big Sis Magne!” Spinner grins, stepping forward to slap a hand against the shoulder of the woman, arm sliding up to draw her into a half-hug. “I was just starting to wonder where you'd disappeared to.”

“Someone had to handle things with the Heroes while you were stuck

here playing baby-sitters.” The red head looks curiously to Katsuki who scowls right back. “How else would we know when they were going to move?” She waves a hand, smiling at the other Villains. “I hear there’s been quite the interesting developments around here,” she presses a bit coyly, eyes on Dabi in particular.

“That’s none of your business, is it, Magne?” Dabi draws.

Himiko on the other hand is practically vibrating in place. “Dabi is dating Kasu-chan and Kasu-chan is really a woman from another world and-“ Dabi slaps a hand over her mouth.

“Really, wackjob, there is such a thing as *oversharing*.”

Himiko pries his hand away, pouting at his lidded look of warning. “Mou, I didn’t even tell them how I could hear you fucking through-“

Blue flames flashes and Himiko bends low, giggling as she spun around and stepped back until she bumped up against Twice who didn’t hesitate to put a hand on her shoulder.

“No need to be self-conscious, Dabi,” Himiko teases. “It sounded like Kasu-chan enjoyed it.”

Katsuki shifts as the room’s attention turns to her, lips curling back to bare her teeth.

“Kasu-chan, huh?” Magne echoes, eyes lingering curiously.

Twice sticks his hand up. “Okay so is everyone just going to ignore that she’s from another world entirely? Because that’s a thing apparently.” He turns to her with amusement that coils heavy and dark into his voice. “**You’re even more fucked up than I first thought.** But it does explain how you knew to ask! Can you hear him – the boy?” he presses eagerly.

Katsuki’s mouth thins.

“Leave her alone, Twice,” Dabi warns mildly. “The Heroes will be here any moment. We don’t have time for chit-chatting.”

“It’s so sweet, seeing you all protective,” Magne sighs with a press of her hand to her cheek. “A captive Princess and her Villainous Guard.”

“Call me Princess again and I’ll fucking *eat* ya,” Katsuki warns with a growl.

"So uncute," Magne flashes her a smile. "But you do have a point Twice, it is pretty curious. What was it like?" she asks, stepping deeper into the room.

"It was fucking *life*," Katsuki mutters. "Break it down to the bare bones and it wasn't much different from this one."

"I doubt it's quite to easy," Magne rebuffs.

"They didn't have Heroes," Himiko confides, yellow eyes flashing to Katsuki, lingering on the bonds keeping her in place. "Or Villains. Or *quirks*."

"Oh?" Magne hums. "Sounds dreamy."

Katsuki nail breaks – she can feel it physically tearing from the nail bed but her mind is *roaring* because *dreamy*? Honestly? What kind of fucked up rose-tinted glasses were at work here?

"There is just *life*," Katsuki heaves out, wrestling against the fury that lurks just beneath her skin. "You either luck out or you *don't*. I don't get," she bites out, "what exactly you think will change with the death of All Might but it won't miraculously stop life being fucking *unkind* to those born with miserable lots of life. That's just fucking humanity for you and you can't change its nature."

"You're quite the pessimistic one, aren't you?" Magne raises both eyebrows.

Katsuki bares her teeth. "If you're so fucking concerned with a more fair society, if you really want to expose the fucking *mess* that is the Hero Society, then maybe you should start by *breaking it down* not – *this*. People will still believe in All Might, in worst case scenario he'll just go down a *martyr*. And the world will fucking celebrate when it brings you down at the coat tails of it."

"Break the system from the inside?" Mr Compress hums. "It's a curious idea but hard to execute, you understand."

Katsuki very deliberately doesn't look at Dabi because they had a fucking golden goose in their midst if they wanted to do *just* such a thing. But she's not shitty enough to dredge up his past even if everyone seemed fine and dandy with dragging up *hers*.

Instead she scoffs. "People are already doing it," she growls. "I don't know where you're hanging about but the internet is having a fucking

gold mine, it's just a matter of putting things together in a way that makes it impossible to deny it. People aren't *blind* to the Heroes beneath All Might because they're not being held to the same fucking standard as the Symbol of Peace. It's still a fucking up-hill battle but people are actively *dying* because of Heroes fucking up, media just isn't very interested in bringing it to attention."

Katsuki rolls her shoulder, glad she'd worn black jeans as she feels blood soak into the fabric.

"What do you even know about this All For One person anyway? Because he's saying he'll fight All Might and *win* and that's a pretty glaring warning sign to me because I know jack shit about him. Does he even want the same thing as you? What's his end game?"

There's a stretch of an uncomfortable silence where the Villains exchange looks and Katsuki's exasperation with the lot of them hits the roof and the lands flat at her feet because-

"Of fucking course you don't know," she breathes. "Kill All Might, happy day, everything else will just roll all dandy with your wishes and wants."

"Careful with the sarcasm there, Katsuki. You might just choke," Dabi says dryly.

She gives him a flat look.

Because she knows his goals amount to murder and then *more* murder with the end of Endeavour and she can't even fault him for it, knowing what she does.

First the Number One Hero and then the Number One Hero *again* as Endeavour rise to take All Might's place.

At least he aims high, Katsuki thinks wryly.

"What's your thoughts on this Dabi?" Mr Compress turns to the fire user who tilts his head, hands in the pocket of his pants and half-slouched where he stands. "You're invested in her future, aren't you? Or so I would assume."

"Yeah, Dabi," Katsuki snarks. "What's your thoughts on this?"

Dabi slants her a look. "We have an... understanding," he says, eyes lidded and dark. "Isn't that right?"

Not explicitly and vocally framed in such a way – no, Katsuki thinks. Because he might not have protested her becoming a Hero but he had very much *kidnapped* her which she was fairly certain went against any sort of understanding between the two of them.

Although, if she's honest, he'd done very little to actually try and convince her of joining the Villains.

He'd been far more focused on making her want to stay with *him*.

"We do," she says finally, deciding that it was just easier to play the game. "Doesn't make me any happy about it though." She blows out a harsh breath. "Also, you can't fucking fault me for asking when you've decided to stick me in the mess of things by fucking *kidnapping* me," she mutters. "Brilliant, really, enjoying the planning here. Lots of thought put into it and not at all completely fucking reliant on some fucking creep you know *nothing* about." She raises her head, furrowing her brow. "Are you sure you're not just trading down All Might for something-" She stiffens, stilling, confusion racking up with a ghostly touch against her shoulder because the Villains are all accounted in front of her and-

The hand tightens warningly, a mouth pressing hot against her ear, so close that she feels the shape of soft lips. "*We're here to rescue you.*"

"... something worse," Katsuki wrestles out because-

What the fuck is See Through doing in the League of Fucking Villains!?

In the *nude*?

-

Tooru had been carefully optimistic about the entire plan in the beginning of things.

It seemed simple enough. Find the hide-out, wait and follow one of the Villains back into it, find Bakugou, get him on his own and *get him out of there*.

Jirou had made sure the coast was clear, had given an accurate lay out of the building and she would keep listening in – keeping control of the area and warn Tooru in case the warp user returned from the backroom.

Shinsou and Yaomomo were both keeping watch, away from things,

but Todoroki was keeping close, ready to intervene.

The ear piece Hatsume-san had made for her, capable of reflecting light and thus invisible in her ear, is quiet – all of them wary of risking even a whisper of sound.

So far nothing is really going to plan because Bakugou is the opposite of being on his own and Tooru is uncomfortably aware of the many Villains around them.

And – Bakugou is apparently a girl? And from another world? And he-*she*, Tooru corrects herself firmly, might be tied up but there is something here that just strikes her as *off*. Because Tooru can read the stress in those tense shoulders but there's no fear when Bakugou tilts her head and meets the turquoise eyes of the scarred Villain.

In fact – Tooru feels her shoulders relax beneath her hand, aware of the levelled breathing of the other as she settled against the back of the chair instead of straining against the bonds.

But maybe the last movement was for Tooru's sake more than anything as she dipped one hand to figure out just what she had to work with.

Her mind is, admittedly, a bit stuck on the whole *Bakugou had sex with a Villain* bit.

Just a smidge.

Is it wrong of her to think that's hot? The fierce and normally volatile Bakugou picked to pieces under the hands of the Villain that had kidnapped hi- her? It's the stuff right out of a *romance novel*.

You better be prepared to tell me everything after all this is over, Tooru thinks as she wavers between waiting for the right moment and just leaving it all to chance and release the bonds there and then and hope for the best.

In the end she settles to wait, eyes drawn down as Bakugou shifted one foot with a tap of the heel.

Tooru's mouth opens in a little whoosh of breath; *oh you brilliant person!*

Because right there is the handle of a knife.

Aizawa-sensei had let her know that she would have a new costume ready after the summer and she vows to herself to incorporate a knife into the things she had already detailed out on the sketch with Hatsume-san. Maybe Ochako-chan would be willing to teach her? Or Bakugou?

Tooru would take anyone at this point.

She crouches silently, sliding two fingers against Bakugou's ankle in acknowledgement without making any move to draw the knife. Too many eyes on them, so far, but it would only be a matter of time before the Heroes arrived and-

"Hand Creep and Fog Bastard, en route," Jirou's voice comes so low, so low that Tooru for a second wonders if she'd imagined it.

And then the door slams open and Tooru moulds herself as close to Bakugou as she dares, craning her head around the chair she was bound to with her heart pounding inside her chest.

She mentally hushes it.

"Shigaraki," Bakugou's voice rings out, dry as desert dust. "You sure you're prepared for this? Because the Heroes will be here any moment and you look fucking *frazzled*."

Do you have a death wish? Tooru wonders a bit despairingly, pinching down on Bakugou's rear to a little twitch of her leg. *Behave!*

"Shut up!" Shigaraki snaps, rounding towards her. "You just- you just sit there and be *quiet!*"

"I thought you weren't in the habit of quieting those who disagree with you," Bakugou jeers.

A low smack rings out and Tooru has an immediate and new appreciation for the Villain, *Dabi*, she corrects herself, because there were a lot of Villains about here.

"Stop being so damn suicidal," he hisses, flicking Bakugou's forehead when she opened her mouth to protest, and she quiets mulishly with a dark look at him.

Tooru gives Dabi an invisible thumbs-up.

What she doesn't like is the return of the warp gate Villain because he

was the one Tooru actively wanted to be far away from by the time she made an attempt to get Bakugou out of things. It would be a terrible rescue mission if they were just... warped right back.

A bit embarrassing, honestly.

She hasn't forgotten how very easily he separated their entire class during the USJ incident.

He is not to be underestimated.

And the hand-guy could make ash of her with a single touch which, no thank you. Tooru had enough anxious dreams about her mom never finding out about her death because no-one could *find her*.

Becoming invisible ash is not on her to-do list.

Tooru eyes the metal quirk suppressors Bakugou is wearing and shifts quietly, mashing herself close, mentally apologizing because she *knows* how much Bakugou loathes being touched but – necessity triumphed any comforts in this particular matter.

"Who has the keys?" she breathes very quietly, timing it with the drawling lilt of Dabi's voice.

Bakugou doesn't stiffen this time, head tilting towards the warp-gate Villain for a brief moment before rolling her neck and slumping deeper into her bonds.

Tooru considering the situation carefully, wondering how much awareness and sense of touch he had with that rippling miasma that made up his body.

"Right or left pocket?" Tooru slides her palms down on Katsuki's biceps and she takes the hint, clenching the right one briefly.

Tooru gives her shoulder a little pat, straightening out.

Key, then knife, she thinks to herself as she takes a careful step forward, evaluating the position of the Villains around her and the hand-guy in particular, the most volatile and unpredictable among them.

Watches as a glass crumbles to nothing in his grasp, eyes glinting red with a sickening sort of anticipation.

Better make it quick, Tooru acknowledges with a wary look.

-

Hitoshi hunkers down, wondering about the luck that had brought the creature – noumu – onto his roof in particular and careful to keep his mouth shut least he distracted Hagakure.

He'd filtered most of the information into the background to be dealt with once they were all well and truly far away from the Villains with Bakugou in tow. But he'd switched the pronouns because – Bakugou, woman, that he could deal with on the now.

The whole *other world* bit could wait.

The noumu is large and hulking, disproportionate in its limbs, brain exposed in a way that made his own throb in sympathy.

Its gaze is distant, focused on nothing in particular as far as he can tell, and it's so firmly *not-human* that Hitoshi doubts his quirk would even be able to work on it. Was it even capable of speech? It *looked* like someone had been experimenting with something that might, generously, once have been human(s?) and they were, supposedly, able to use quirks.

Can or cannot? Do I risk it?

His stomach curls, regretting the fish despite knowing it made his quirk stronger, easier to use.

He shifts back on his haunches, muscles wired tense as he waits.

Hurry up, you idiot.

Mina is waiting for you.

-

My brother might be in there.

Shouto's heart pounds inside his chest, one hand pressed against the ear piece, carefully monitoring the situation while straining his hearing for just another word from the Villain with the blue flames.

Touya...

Chapter End Notes

Katsuki's got her priorities right as always.

In the nude, really, Tooru.

Honestly, the sheer guts of that girl.

First rescue team is in place because they're stealthing this while the Heroes are more... heavy-hitters. I like to think of it as the problem with society favouring the flashy quirks over anything.

Considering the course of U.A. it's hard not to wonder just how many useful quirks that has been completely disregarded for something louder, brighter and more eye-catching.

Katsuki's secret is slipping through her fingers and she's very much not enjoying it because it's a goddamn awful thing to be robbed of the choice of telling.

Heroes, Villains and a handful of students - how will it all come together?

(It's a personal hc of mine that Shinsou eats fish to strengthen his quirk but that he absolutely loathes it. He was rolling and mashing it together with rice in one of the earlier chapters where I snuck it in. I haven't actually checked his profile for favorite foods but I've decided that it's *not fish* because it amuses me).

Your comments are just <3 thank you for making this a joy to write and share with you guys!

I'm artsy-death on tumblr at this has been chapter 29 of In The End.

I hope you enjoyed!

Choking

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Katsuki is half wondering if she won't end up dying by a heart attack.

The anxiety twists through her, pounding her heart so loud and hard she's wondering how the *fuck* no-one but her can hear it.

She can't see See Through, for obvious reasons, and while she's aware of it being a *good thing* it also leaves her uncomfortably aware of the fact that *a teenager* was risking her *fucking life* for *her*.

The Heroes made sense – it was their *fucking job*. But See Through had no business being here and Katsuki had absolutely no choice but to play along or risk screwing things up for the other girl. And she knows there's no chance See Through decided to do this on her own which means Katsuki had an unknown amount of *more* teenagers on the scene.

There's no fucking way I'm not ratting you out to Aizawa the moment I see him, Katsuki thinks just a bit vindictively because *fuck*.

She keeps her head hanging low, watching with lidded eyes as the Villains wait for the Heroes to move. Shigaraki had slumped down at the bar when there was no sign of immediate appearance of them, hand tapping impatiently and nursing a new glass of something courtesy of Kurogiri.

At least Kurogiri had habitually picked up a glass to clean, looking perfectly content to wait the entire situation out, which meant his hands were distracted and not about to slip into a pocket to check for the key.

Or so Katsuki *fucking hopes*.

“Who do you think will make an appearance?” Katsuki shifts her attention to Himiko who had sprawled backwards on a chair, her chin on the back of it, one leg swinging. “All Might is coming for sure, right? I wonder who else...”

Katsuki blows out a breath. “Fuck if I know. Endeavour probably, he's stationed pretty near here.” Her brow furrows and she absently

wonders if Best Jeanist would make an appearance – the man was ranked Number Four Hero for a reason and they would likely go for as high numbers as possible.

And Heroes were kinda notorious for taking things very personally.

“That teacher of yours might make an appearance,” Dabi draws, stepping closer. “He was quite protective of his students. Admirably so, really.”

“Sounds like him.” Katsuki grimaces. “But yeah, probably. Would be stupid of them not to bring him.” Really, Aizawa’s power was an absolutely fascinating thing – capable of dragging the most overwhelming quirk down on even footing with just a *look*.

If the whole of the Hero Society wasn’t so fucking *obsessed* with flashy quirks Aizawa would have ranked higher than he did, easily. Her own feelings aside, she would take a man capable of *preventing fires* over someone *causing them* – she had read the threads of civilians caught in the aftermath of Endeavour’s destruction.

Villain stopped, house burnt down; how people could close their eyes to that sort of destruction was just absolutely beyond her.

Katsuki had spent years being praised for her quirk, had the memories of the boy whose chest had filled with a sense of *rightness*, an egocentric kind of narcissism balanced with an odd sort of feeling of inadequacy that had made him lash out.

It was like people were perfectly willing to overlook that she was a walking time bomb waiting to happen just because it was fucking *flashy*.

And the whole fucking *curriculum* at U.A. was so fucking biased towards strong quirks that it was *ridiculous*. Giant robots, one-on-one matches during the Sports Festival - it left those with quirks like See Through’s or Shinsou’s hopelessly outmatched.

Katsuki would bet anything that the entire fucking rescue thing would be made by heavy hitters and high-ranked Heroes and yet, See Through was fucking here, wasn’t she? Sixteen and so very fucking easily infiltrating the League of Villains because she *wasn’t* flashy. Because it was fucking *sensible* to try and get the kidnapping victim *out* without blowing a wall and risking their life in the process.

She had seen enough kidnapping dramas during shows in her old

world to know that going in, guns blazing, was a sure way to get a lot of people killed.

“You never said.” Dabi reaches out, drawing his fingers through the spikes of her hair before clenching down and tipping her head back to look at her. “But what’s it like, on the Hero course?”

“What’s with the sudden curiosity?” Katsuki grumbles, absolutely *not* distracted by how close his face suddenly was to hers. “It could be fucking better.”

“How so?”

Katsuki gives him a dry look. “Planning on signing up? You’re probably a bit too late but there’s sure to be some remedial classes about *somewhere*.”

“Cute.” Dabi gives her hair a little tug. “But there must be *something* interesting, seeing as you’re so keen on going back to it.”

“Means to an end,” Katsuki says flatly. “Honestly, Principal Nedzu is supposed to be like a fucking genius or something but the whole course is a fucking *joke*.” They hadn’t even had any search and rescue missions, all of the focus had been on throwing the kids at each other, playing Heroes and Villains, stop the adversary by any means necessary. The USJ had been the closest thing to a rescue stimulation they’d had and it had ended rather abruptly.

Katsuki had wondered at more than one point if it was because of All Might – but it might just be her bias talking. It could just as likely be because they had, actively, been targeted by the League of Villains.

Or rather *All Might* had been targeted. Which was another fucking question as to *why* he was allowed to remain when he put a target on their head by his association.

Means to an end? A necessary sacrifice for Deku to keep being trained? Hell if Katsuki knew.

“You say that and yet you will not join us?” Dabi lowers his voice, his eyes searching hers. “You see the need for change as much as we do.” For the first time since she’d met Dabi more than four years earlier there’s something pressing in his voice, something urgent as he bends even closer. “You can be so much more than *this*.”

“We have different ideas of what more fucking entails because I

fucking refuse to play to the will and whims of a mad man,” Katsuki hisses back. “I might not have much control of anything these days but I have some fucking integrity and I do not *bow*.”

Dabi is quiet for a moment, his grip on her hair slowly relaxing and he breathed out, hand sliding down to cup her jaw.

And then his mouth was slanting over hers and Katsuki stiffens in surprise – all too aware of the Villains around them, of See Thorough somewhere in the room.

But Dabi’s lips are soft and rough and only lingers for a moment before he pulls away, his thumb brushing against the corner of her lips before he straightened up, hands slipping into the pockets of his jeans as he nonchalantly stepped back.

Himiko pretends to fan her face and Katsuki shoots her a flat look.

“Dabi,” Shigaraki slumps forward on his seat. “Do I need to remind you of what we’re doing here?”

“Nah,” Dabi drawls, eyes unreadable as he glances back towards her. “We’re killing some Heroes. The best and brightest society has to offer.”

Ice slithers down Katsuki’s spine and she clenches her teeth.

“Mou, don’t be jealous, Tomura.” Himiko kicks her foot. “I know you want Kasu-chan all for yourself but Dabi found her *first*.”

“I want nothing to do with that *liar*,” Shigaraki says petulantly. “The only one I need is *Sensei*.”

“I used to tell myself the same thing, ya know?” Katsuki flexes her fingers inside the entrapment, careful to keep her palms up. “It does get awfully lonely.”

Shigaraki’s red eyes lingers on her for a moment before he simply turns away, shoulders noticeably stiff.

“I’m nothing like *you*.”

I think we’re more alike than either of us want to admit to, Katsuki thinks but does not say. *Lost in a too big world*.

“You’re not feeling lonely anymore, are you, Kasu-chan?” Himiko looks to her with a feverish sort of light in her yellow eyes. “Because

you have us now. Everything is going to be okay!”

Katsuki gives her a blank stare and then rolls her eyes with a huff.

“Sure, everything is going to be fine fucking dandy. I’m really enjoying the whole *bonding* session we’ve got going for us.”

Himiko pouts at her. “You’ll see, Kasu-chan! We’ll change this world. We’ll change *everything*. And then you won’t have to be afraid anymore because no-one will be able to force you into being something you’re *not*.”

“I already told you it’s my fucking choice,” Katsuki growls. “... Though I appreciate the sentiment, I suppose,” she tacks on grudgingly because Himiko’s smile wavers.

Himiko perks up, beaming at her.

Distracted she nearly jerks when an invisible hand squeezes down against her shoulder.

“I have the key,” See Through’s voice comes very quietly with the press of lips against her ear. *“Yaomomo says she can see the Heroes outside. I am going to release you and we’ll make a break for it.”* There’s a note of urgency in her voice, a rippling sort of tension even as it remained steady and quiet.

See Through doesn’t give her much time to wonder how exactly she’d managed to pull it off because the knife was slipping out of her boot, key becoming visible as it quietly pressed into the lock of her cuffs and Katsuki’s heart thrums.

The sound of metal rings through the room, the bonds between her legs following and then the ones at her shoulders, and the Villains all swivels towards her as the cuffs fall heavily at her feet.

Her hands become visible, nitroglycerin pooled in the palms of them.

Katsuki snaps them forward, a spark shooting off to follow in the path of the drops in a chain reaction, and she meets Dabi’s eyes just as his arm loops around Himiko’s waist as an explosions burst large and violent in a roar of red and yellow flames that blue rises to meet.

-

Shouta’s head snaps down to the Villain’s hideout as the explosion

rings out – knowing just who had to be responsible and cursing as he twisted on his feet.

But All Might was already pushing off the roof, cement cracking beneath his foot, and Shouta is left staring at nothing.

“Fuck,” he breathes out with feeling.

-

Shouto only just gets a wall of ice up in time, ear ringing from the sound of the explosion as the bar was swallowed up by flames.

“*Hagakure!*” Yaoyorozu’s voice rings out with panic but Shouto hesitates because, that explosion meant that Bakugou had gotten out and-

Another explosion rings out, blue flames flaring out through the windows, and Shouto draws back as All Might lands, ground caving beneath him, fist drawn back as he rocked forward, the entire wall exploding with a roar of whip-like force as the very *air* seemed to momentarily concave around his fist.

Portals opens up on the street and Shouto’s eyes snaps to Bakugou when she rolled out in an awkward twist that made it very clear that she had wrapped around something, and he allows himself to breathe out even as the Villains followed.

“Bakugou has Hagakure,” he reports tensely with a press against the ear piece as Bakugou scrambled up, momentarily supporting something before they both found their footing. “There’s eight Villains that I can see.”

Bakugou snaps around, arm already out stretched as blue flames roared towards them both, and Shouto prepares his ice but All Might is faster, palms slamming together to send a violent gust of air that makes the flames *blow back*.

Bakugou flattens over Hagakure’s body and Shouto can’t make out her expression but he suspects there’s nothing good to it.

“Todoroki!” Jirou scrambles up beside him, one hand pressed towards her right ear which was bleeding. “Is-“

“*The noumu is moving!*” Shinsou’s voice suddenly snaps through the ear piece, voice visibly strained. “*I managed to slow down one but-*” His

voice cuts off, a ragged sort of breath ringing heavily and there's a muffled grunt.

"Where are you?" Shouto demands. "The Heroes--"

"*North, three roof tops down!*" Yaoyorozu interrupts. "*I think he's managed to get it under his quirk but- he won't be able to hold it for long!*"

Shouto looks out of the alleyway of the burning bar as more and more Heroes arrived, Endeavour's steps heavy, Hawks fluttering in the sky, eyes gliding over the situation, taking it in.

"We need to get away from here – I'll grab Shinsou, re-group down the street!" Shouto orders, already pressing down, ice rising beneath him to send him rocketing up to the roof.

-

Katsuki hunches over See Through's body, the sheer *force* behind a simple *clap* absolutely ridiculous as she was forced to her knees, grunting as she curled tighter around the other girl.

"There's no escape for you, League of Villains!" All Might's voice rings over it all, resolute and sure, and his visage lacking any sort of smile. "Why do you ask? **Because we are here.**"

"Fuck," Katsuki breathes. "You need to get out of here."

"I know!" See Through practically squeaks. "But I got you out, didn't I?"

Katsuki can't fucking see her but she snorts, grasping more firmly at See Through's shoulder. "You did, *Hagakure.*"

"I feel so flattered, somehow," the other girl mutters as Katsuki pushes up, and at least Hagakure is fucking *sensible* because she plants herself firmly behind her. "Just to check – female pronouns?"

"Yeah," Katsuki grunts, watching as more and more Heroes appeared around them, the cries of noumus following in their footsteps, appearing like grotesquely shaped insects with gaping mouths and misshaped limbs down from exploding windows and walls.

Goes low as she registers movement at her peripheral vision, kicking her foot off to snap the hand off-course and Hagakure's hand grasps at her hoodie to get them both down below a second one.

“Now, now – we still have need of you, Bakugou,” Compress says chidingly and Katsuki scowls at him because she still has no fucking idea what his quirk is and-

Wooden branches wraps around him, halting him and drawing him back from the both of them and Katsuki sees Kamui Wood’s fingers branching out wide above them, targeting the Villains and twisting thick around them even as blue flames rippled wide and hot around Dabi.

Katsuki twists around when she hears Himiko’s voice ring out, moving before her brain registers the motion, but Hagakure is faster and Katsuki chokes in surprise as her hood is pulled *hard*, her back bending instinctively to avoid getting strangled, feet twisting and a hand clamping down around a slim throat.

The violence simmers beneath her skin, pounding with the beat of her heart.

“*We’re here to rescue you,*” Hagakure says with a swallow that presses against the palm of Katsuki’s hand. “I don’t know what, exactly, is going on between you and the Villains but you risk losing *everything*. Ashido-“

“Then what the fuck am I supposed to do!?” Katsuki snarls. “Himiko is-“

“A *Villain*,” Hagakure interrupts desperately.

“She doesn’t have to be,” Katsuki grits out. “She’s – she can still get out of this. I just-“ But she doesn’t know what to fucking *do* and the knowledge twists ugly inside her chest.

“Kasu-chan!”

Katsuki’s hand tightens around Hagakure’s throat, gaze shifting.

“*Kasu-chan*-“

She twists, forcing Hagakure with the motion, releasing her as her boot rose up and slammed into her ribs with a choked gasp as she flew back, colliding hard against Aizawa’s chest as his feet hit the ground, yellow goggles in place and hair floating.

“Bakugou-“

“I can’t give up on them,” Katsuki says heavily, taking a step back and then she twists, pelting towards Himiko as Aizawa cursed behind them both.

Katsuki feels her quirk resettle and she twists low in a skidding roll beneath a grasping hand that reaches for her, flipping back and taking two staggering steps backwards before she turned around, her sweaty palm wrapping around the wood squeezing hard around Himiko.

“Kasu-chan.” A wide wobbly sort of smile, wood squeezing harder around her. “I knew- I knew you wouldn’t leave me.”

Katsuki grits her teeth, clenching down, focusing on her quirk and-
Her hand loses its grip, reality twisting sharply around her.

Black sludge bubbles and pools around her, *from her*, swallowing her up as she stumbled back, twisting around as her hands went automatically for her throat because she’s *choking* and she heaves as it pools in her *lungs* as she struggles for air that won’t come and-

“Bakugou-shounen!”

Katsuki’s head lifts, meeting the desperate blue eyes of All Might, her hand twisting out of the inky darkness and-

I don’t want to die

A wet gurgle leaves her mouth, jerking towards him, fingers brushing just as Katsuki’s world is swallowed by nothingness.

-

Toshinori stares at the empty spot previously occupied by his student, chest heaving, the failure rippling through him as the last of the Villains disappeared, swallowed up by a quirk he had only witnessed once before in his life.

“All For One,” he breathes out, closing his eyes, fists curling and teeth clenching tight.

Bakugou’s wide fearful eyes burn on the inside of his eyes, a vivid sort of desperation that sends a demand for retribution frothing through his veins and he flexes his hands to ease it.

Nana...

“Endeavour?” His colleague pauses, twisting around to look at him even through the cacophony of noise around them. “Can you handle this?”

“Does it look like I can’t?” Endeavour snaps back. “If you got to go then get going already!”

All Might lifts his head.

“Yeah, you take care of everyone here.”

Chapter End Notes

So, I'm obviously changing a lot of things with the plot but bear with me, there's a lot going on and I'm trying to balance it all out the best as I can. There's a lot that's about to go down and there's choices to be made on all sides.

All decisions comes with its price, after all.

Some of you might already have noticed but if you're interested in the smut scene that went down between chapter 27 and 28 there's now an companion piece up so just click to part 2 of this serie if it's something that interests you.

Thank you for all your wonderful comments <3 I'm doing my best to catch up to them when I have the time and energy to form the proper responses that you all deserve because I am so very soft for you all.

I'm artsy-death on tumblr if you're about there and this has been chapter 30 of In The End.

I hope you enjoyed!

Drowning

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

I don't want to die.

The dead woman's voice resonates through her mind as Katsuki's knees hits the ground, vomiting black sludge, coughing and wheezing, her world spinning around her.

I don't want to die. I don't want to die. I don't want to die.

"Shut up!" Katsuki hisses out, pushing up, wiping sludge away from her lip with her sleeve as she straightened up to her full-height.

A bare landscape stretches out in front of her, a single man amidst ruin, his black metallic mask hiding any sort of expression as he considers her.

Not far from them lies three Pro-Heroes, one Katsuki recognises as Gang Orca, another as Tiger, Mt. Lady and then Best Jeanist – unconscious, as far as she can tell. His clothes threaded and ruined and she sees the blood on his chest and staining the once immaculate blond strands of his hair.

Remembers how he'd tried to force both jeans and shirt on her, insisting that a good Hero didn't wear the slouching kind she favoured. He'd snuck them into her packing on the once day and she still had them buried in the back of her wardrobe though she'd made liberal use of the Best Jeanist t-shirt.

It had felt like a promise – to herself, somehow. That Heroes-

That there were *good* Heroes.

And All For One had defeated them so very easily, a power that didn't fairly belong to any human.

Above them the skies are dark, clouds gathering thick and heavy with promise, and she can almost taste the rain in the air.

"I apologize for the messy transportation," All For One says where he stands and the hair at the back of her neck rises at the sound of his

voice. "Tomura will be here very soon but I wanted a chance to talk to you one-on-one before that."

Katsuki flexes her fingers.

"Do you know what my power is, Bakugou Katsuki? If that is what you wish to be called."

"It's *my* name," Katsuki growls at him, wary and distrustful and not wanting a single *fuck* to do with whatever *reason* he had for bringing her here.

"I suppose it is." All For One inclines his head. "It's admirable, really, the way you've come to accept and grow into yourself. It can't have been easy." He sounds almost... *sympathetic* and it makes her hackles grow in response. "You are young, especially to the workings of this world, but you understand some of it better than Heroes who have been around for years."

"What do you want?" Katsuki demands, sliding one booted foot back despite knowing she had no way of escaping. He had already picked her up and brought her here from fucking *nowhere* and it would be a long way running before she could even think of hiding behind something.

The fucker had made sure of it and she doesn't like it.

I don't want to die, the dead woman's voice resonates inside her mind, tangling with her own wariness and fear with the thickening scent of rain and Katsuki clenches her teeth.

"My power allows me to *take* the quirks of others and make use of them for myself," All For One tells her and Katsuki takes an instinctive step back, something terrible in her chest as she looks at him. "Ah, I see that does not sit well with you. I imagine, that for someone who comes from a world without quirks, such power cannot have been easy to accept. I have heard your quite *fierce* opinion on the matter."

"That kind of power does not belong to a single human," Katsuki grits out, curling her fists to hide the tremble that runs through her.

All For One hums, head rising to look into the distance. "I put up a distraction for All Might but I suspect it will not hold him for long. Pity. I would have been interested to hear more of your thoughts on it. But – we have more important matters at hand, you and I. Namely the power that brought you here in the first place."

“My world didn’t have quirks.” Katsuki takes another step backwards, despite knowing there were nowhere to run because there’s something sharp and wretched bubbling inside of her and for the first time in her life her instincts are telling her to *run* rather than to *fight*.

It leaves her feeling off-kilter and too small in her body.

“No,” All For One agrees. “But what is a quirk but power, solidified into a concept graspable by the human mind?” He takes a step forward. “I have a weakness, I admit. You see, when I see such an interesting quirk, or power, I cannot help but want it for myself.” Katsuki jerks sharply backwards. “It is my intention to leave Tomura to his plans but I do not believe this one small thing will interfere...”

His hand rises towards her, fingers curling, and Katsuki chokes because something *grasps* inside of her, and her boots slides across the ground even as she twists, digging in desperately and hopelessly.

She comes to a halt in front of him, body locked in place, and his fingers slides beneath her chin, her skin crawling as his tall body bent to put her closer to his covered face.

“Bakugou Katsuki... what should have been a boy of sixteen but is now made up of the memories of a thirty-year-old woman who should have died but *didn’t*. Yes. I can *feel it*. That desperate will to *live*.” His rasping artificial breathing is too loud in her ears, memories of waking up in the hospital with a tube shoved down her throat slipping unbidden to the front of her mind. “You did not die a kind death,” he murmurs, tilting her chin up further, fingers spreading, his palm flattening against her throat.

And then – impossibly – Katsuki feels something inside of her *pull*.

It’s a gnarled knotted thing tangled up in too much inside of her and she gasps, choking, because he’s *tearing her apart*.

It unravels inside of her and the dead woman’s screams echoes through her mind, her desperate pleading, feelings Katsuki wanted nothing to do with burning livid hot thorough her and she chokes and drowns, her lungs pooling with her own blood, tasting the iron of betrayal-

“I’m sorry.”

Katsuki jerks, a desperate heaving noise registering distantly and she’s released abruptly, her knees hitting the ground and she stares blankly

down at the black pool of inky darkness and half-mashed food and-

"I'm sorry."

She vomits a second time, taste the acidic on her tongue as her stomach cramps desperately to rid of *something* and-

"I'm sorry."

Her world tips and blur around her, concrete and field of straw coloured grass with apples trees stout and proud beneath the warm sunny sky and-

"Hmm, stubborn," a voice says far above her and Katsuki doesn't understand because she shouldn't be hearing anything at all because- "

Katsuki sees grey skies.

Katsuki sees the sun.

Something grasps and squeezes inside her chest but Katsuki is too out of it to register more than a pain she should be feeling, skies mixing and flickering, a masked face and a pale one wet with the rain falling down above them both.

Katsuki thinks she might be screaming.

She sees the rain falling from a grey sky and her best friend bending over her with eyes that are too kind to belong to someone with a knife in his hand as she chokes and drowns.

-

Katsuki stares up at the dark grey skies.

The world feels distant, hollow and out of her reach, like something out of a fever dream. She thinks – her ears might be bleeding. She thinks – something might have broken because-

A foot nudges up against her side and Katsuki's head tips, sees a fancy black leather shoe, can't put any value to it as she stares blankly at it.

"Breathe," a strangely rattling voice tells her and Katsuki doesn't *understand*.

But then it lifts, pressing down against her ribs, and Katsuki jerks, sucking in a wet desperate sort of breath, chokes, but makes a second

attempt and-

“Good,” the strangely rattling voice tells her.

Katsuki’s mind reaches but it tangles inside of her, reason beyond her grasp, and she doesn’t know where she is, doesn’t know who she’s looking at, doesn’t-

Everything is just... off.

Like static on a television screen.

“It might comfort you to know what the power that twisted too deep inside of you for me to remove it,” the strangely rattling voice tells her. “I took the liberty of destroying it completely. An apology, if you will. Tomura still have use for you after all and he seems to be betting on your cooperation.”

“It’s raining,” Katsuki tells the strangely rattling voice, her eyes finding a dark metallic helmet which feels... *wrong*. Somehow. Because humans are supposed to have faces but-

The strangely rattling voice with the metallic helmet tilts his head up towards the dark skies and then down at her.

“It is not,” he disagrees.

Katsuki wonders why he’s lying.

She can-

“Ah, so he’s finally found his way here,” the strangely rattling voice with the metallic helmet says. “Late as always. But he cannot be faulted. Age is a terrible enemy, after all.”

Katsuki’s ears are ringing strangely as she turns her head to look as the ground crackles and breaks, shaking strangely through a body that doesn’t feel like it belongs to her.

Sees blue.

All Might! The feverish voice of a young boy resonates through her mind. *All Might is here! He’ll-*

Kill us.

“All Might,” she rasps because there’s no mistaking those blue eyes

and yellow hair and she *doesn't want to be here* because-

Katsuki sees fists and violence and tastes iron on her tongue and-

I don't understand, the dead boy whispers, lost and unsure inside her mind where he draws back. *All Might wouldn't-*

"What- what did you do to him?" All Might demands.

"Corrected a simple wrong in the world," the strangely rattling voice with the metallic helmet answers.

Katsuki feels wildly out of touch and not *interested* but when she tries to twist around she ends up jerking twitchily to her side, out of sorts with everything and the buzzing so loud that for a moment she squeezes her eyes shut and wishes she could do the same with her ears.

When she opens them again her nose is pressed against leathery shoes and a hazy sort of confusion worms through her.

"I did not expect this to be the side-effect, I admit." The shoe shifts back and for some reason Katsuki's arms flops out, arm looping around an ankle and fingers curling in the hem of fine black slacks and her shoulder sorta half-sprawls on the fine leathery shoes.

Expensive, something inside of her notes.

Irrelevant, something else grumbles.

Katsuki wonders if it's insanity to wonder about one's sanity. It had to take *something* to question it in the first place.

She doesn't feel very good.

Katsuki wonders if the strangely rattling voice with the metallic helmet and fancy shoes would mind terribly if she threw up on him.

She kinda wants to.

Nothing left to throw-up, something informs her dryly.

"Your shoes are safe," Katsuki informs the strangely rattling voice with the metallic helmet and fancy shoes.

Realises with a sense of distant awkwardness that won't quite register as her own that they were having a Very Important Talking above her

but had both quieted to look down at her.

Rude, something drawls but it doesn't feel like it's directed to her.

"Just sayin'," Katsuki grumps and then sorts half-wiggles, half-slumps backwards with her face half-crammed against the fancy shoes below her and her shoulders pressing up against a... leg. "Mr Him-"

"All For One."

"Mr Darth Vader," Katsuki soldiers on. "Says it's not raining but- but it's raining, right?"

Blue eyes stares down at her.

"No," All Might answers after a brief moment of hesitance.

Katsuki furrows her brows, feeling rather like she was threading through water and the world was refusing to make sense around her.

"As amusing this is," the strangely rattling voice with the metallic helmet and fancy shoes says. "I believe we have more important things to deal with, *All Might*." He raises his head, peering into the distance, and Katsuki draws her chin up to sorta lethargically follow his direction of sight.

Sees buildings.

And.

Humans?

"Tomura," the strangely rattling voice with the metallic helmet and fancy shoes says.

"Tomura," Katsuki echoes and for some reason she's looking at the gangly awkward man with a hand on his face – though there *is* a face.

For some reason that feels important.

Know thyself, something reasons with what might have been a shrug.

The man – Tomura – does a funny little jerky motion, red eyes flashing towards her.

She thinks he looks surprised. Like an owl. *Owl-ish*. Messy hair in need of a good preening – maybe his life would be better if he had a beak?

And – he wouldn't have to have that hand on his face if he had a beak to cover up... insecurities.

Katsuki's brow creases because it doesn't feel quite *right* and when she tries to picture it all she sees is black feathers.

And preening oneself had to be hard anyway.

“What the fuck is wrong with you?”

Katsuki cranes her head, blinking at white against black. A mask. Duality.

Flashes all her teeth.

“I'm dead,” she informs him.

“You're not,” another voice says.

“You have pretty eyes,” Katsuki informs him solemnly, admiring turquoise eyes as she pushes just enough to slump on her back, her hand remaining wrapped around the leg. “And I am,” she tags on a bit belatedly.

Yellow takes up her vision, a body crouching down before her to peer at her and Katsuki blinks back.

“You have fangs,” she tells the girl. “Like a *vampire*.”

“Mou, you're really out of it, Kasu-chan.”

“I don't feel right,” Katsuki agrees, reaching a hand up, but it sorta flops awkwardly against the girl's chest and she furrows her brow but a slim hand reaches down and wraps around it and tugs it up to press against a warm cheek. “Thank you,” Katsuki says, spreading her fingers and giving a little awkward tap.

“Himiko-chan.”

“Himiko-chan,” Katsuki nods.

“What did you do to her?” Turquoise Eyes sounds... something.

Katsuki doesn't like it. She doesn't *understand it* but she knows she doesn't like it.

All Might steps forward and Katsuki sorta jerks, twisting and clinging

tighter to the leg she'd claimed for herself because he's reaching for her and-

I don't want to die.

The world warps and twists around her and someone is *moving* and then there's *rocks* and Katsuki watches All Might go *flying* and...

That doesn't feel right *either*.

"You have failed again, Tomura." Tomura slowly rises his head from Katsuki. "But you mustn't loose heart. There will be more chances to set things right. That's why I've brought along your little band. And the girl, because you determined her an important pawn." Katsuki wonders if she's *the girl* because she's not- she's not – she's not-. "So try again. That's what I'm here to help you do."

Katsuki twists her hand deeper in fine black slacks, feels the fabric beneath her skin like an afterthought and echo of what *is*.

The scent of something sickeningly sweet stings at her nose.

"It's all for *you*."

"I won't allow you to take him!" All Might rockets towards them.

"I won't fail you, Sensei," Tomura says as he straightens out to his full-height.

Katsuki meets Turquoise Eyes.

She gives him a lopsided grin just as All Might draws his fist back, hands rising to meet him.

"*Boom*," she mouths to him and his eyes flares wide, darting towards the grip she still has on fine dress pants and something sparks at the very tip of her fingers.

He lurches towards her, hands grasping at her hoodie and then the world is *exploding* and a body wraps around her, rolling and skidding on the rocky ground and Katsuki wheezes out a surprised breath as the world rattles around her.

Lands sprawled against a slim familiar chest and a hollow sort of ringing noise in her ears that doesn't feel *right*.

"Ah," she grunts, feeling metal press against her cheek. "Big boom."

Arms wraps around her and Katsuki stills.

"I don't know what's wrong with you," Turquoise Eyes heaves out. "But you're as suicidal as ever." He pushes up and Katsuki finds herself hauled up, one arm keeping her pressed against his chest as her legs sorta wobbles beneath her and everything is kinda topsy-turvy. In the not fun way.

"What do we do?" Himiko-chan demands as she skids up beside them, a knife in either hand. "I don't think Kasu-chan made him very happy."

"He's a *liar*," Katsuki complains.

In the middle of the empty stretch of missing buildings smoke slowly wafts to the side and Katsuki blinks slowly because-

"Very big boom," she amends because there's *skin* missing. Peeled away in a stretch of charred remains and fabric burnt to ash all the way up his thigh and there's... a chunk of flesh *missing*.

She presses back against the warm chest behind her as the air stretches with a strange sort of coldness that makes her peer dubiously up towards the sky because it's *raining* not *snowing* but-

"Get him out of here!" All Might's voice rings out as large spidery black *things* explodes out towards them and-

Blue flames wraps around them in a wall of heat that the black things goes right through and Katsuki looks at sharp ends without understanding because-

And then she's on the ground and there's a grunt from above her, warmth wrapped around her, something wet against her back and-

"You need to snap out of it!" A voice growls into her ear. "Or you're going to get yourself killed!"

"But I'm dead," Katsuki heaves out. "I'm-"

"*Alive*," Turquoise Eyes hisses as he draws them both up. "Wackjob-change of plans. We're getting her out of here."

"Aye, aye!" Himiko-chan salutes and Katsuki finds herself hauled onto a shoulder with a grunt and her fingers curl into a leathery coat, raising her head to watch black fingers stretch and dig into smoky fog

dressed in fine clothing and-

Is that a human? Katsuki wonders as it gives a jerk and a strange sort of shudder, twisting and convulsing, mist stretching up to form an inky sort of darkness that makes Katsuki press closer to Turquoise Eyes.

“Dabi-“ Tomura twists around towards them. “You can’t-“

“Sorry, Shiggy, but Kasu-chan needs us!” Himiko waves her hand. “Bye, bye!”

Noise rise around them, something shatters, the very air rattling, and Katsuki twists to bury her face into a scarred neck with a low whine because-

Something inside of her doesn’t feel right.

Chapter End Notes

Katsuki is having a very bad time and she rather needs a vacation. Or two. Honestly.

We're far from done with the rescue arc and there's a lot of pieces to slot together and red threads to gather up so hang on tight because I'm about to take you all for a spin.

Thank you for some absolutely wonderful comments <3 Always makes my day.

I'm artsy-death on tumblr as this has been chapter 31 of In The End.

I hope you enjoyed!

Topsy-Turvy

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Katsuki's mind is buzzing but strangely some of the jaggedness eases at the scent that fills her nose as she sucks in a lungful of air, Turquoise Eyes dark dress shoes pounding against the ground, her body jostling as she lifted her head from his neck.

"Ah." Katsuki's hand curls a bit unsurely into the coat. "They're following us."

Himiko-chan twists around, a knife rocketing through the air, but the red haired woman reaches a hand out and it bends through the air, curling before shooting off back and Himiko-chan yelps as she dives into a roll to avoid it.

Turquoise Eyes ripples with heat beneath her and blue flames flares out behind them and Katsuki's eyes widen, one hand reaching out towards it, entranced by the beauty as it rolls over the ground in a roaring sea of violence that makes the other humans scramble back.

"Pretty," she breaths, awed.

"Not the usual reaction," Turquoise Eyes grunts. "What the hell did he do to you?"

Katsuki opens her mouth but Turquoise Eyes skids to a sudden halt, twisting them out of the path of an enormous *monster* and Katsuki stumbles as he drops her down, both of his hands thrusting out as inky darkness bubbles in the air, two more creatures climbing out of them with distorted limbs and gaping mouths.

"Oh boy," Himiko-chan mutters, spinning her knives with a glance towards their pursuers. "Dabi-"

"I know," Turquoise Eyes – *Dabi* – grunts out.

Katsuki tries to push up but collapses back down as her world spins around her, straw grass and ruined concrete rippling beneath her palms and she digs her fingers into it but – she feels it both as true as if it *was* and nausea rolls through her, the ringing in her head intensifying as she gasped for breath.

“I don’t feel very good,” she acknowledges to herself, feeling rather miserable as she collapsed onto her rump, pressing her palms over her ears, wishing everything would be *quiet*.

“You need to run!” Dabi shouts at her but Katsuki draws her knees to her chest and digs her nails into the skin above her ears as she struggles for sense. “For fu- Katsuki!”

“*Can’t*,” she gasps. “I can’t-“ She shuts her mouth, swallowing against the acidic taste in her mouth.

“I won’t allow you to ruin my plans, Dabi!” Tomura lunges towards him, one arm out stretched, but Dabi twists around it, his palm flaring blue as it grasped at the hand covering Tomura’s face and there’s an explosion of sound of light that makes Katsuki hunker down.

Himiko-chan’s hand reaches her through the smoke, wrapping around her wrist and forcefully drawing her up.

“Not the time, Kasu-chan,” she scolds as Katsuki stumbles, nearly collapsing again, but Himiko-chan is strong and she hauls Katsuki’s arm over her shoulder, half-carrying, half-dragging her along with her.

Katsuki squints up as something registers.

“What’s that?” she asks as Himiko-chan bodily shoulders her forward.

“What’s-“ Himiko-chan follows her gaze, her mouth clicking shut and steps halting at the dark mass exploding towards them in a flying leap of enormous limbs. Another monster – darker and broader than the pale twisting ones, its brain rippling pink on its skull and-

That can’t be right, Katsuki thinks faintly. *Brains are supposed to be inside-*

It collides hard with the pale one reaching towards Dabi, enormous body contorting and lashing out towards Tomura and-

There are *children* on top of it – red and white hair on a pale boy and another, tired one, with a mess of purple, both of them holding on desperately as the creature roar beneath them both, its eyes large and empty.

“Shouto?” Dabi stumbles back, one hand rising up to cover his face.

The red and white haired boy snaps towards him, mismatched eyes glittering. “*Touya*,” he says, almost triumphantly.

“I thought his name was Dabi,” Katsuki says bleakly, quite sure she’s hallucinating.

Or maybe this is what death is like? She kinda wants a refund.

She looks to the boy with purple hair, unable to resist slotting him as Purple Guy just as he hunches forward and his ears are *bleeding*, teeth gritting.

“Todoroki-“ he gasps and the other boy, Half-n-Half, Katsuki decides with a ringing of *truth*, tightens his arm around his waist.

“Shinsou can’t hold it for long,” he bites out. “Hurry up and get on!” He looks to her, one hand stretching out, and Katsuki finds herself reaching back after a nudge from Himiko-chan, fingers curling around his wrist as he hauled her up behind him.

The monster growls, muscles rippling below her and Katsuki turns her gaze a bit dubiously down as Himiko-chan scrambles up behind her, arms wrapping around her waist.

Katsuki automatically does the same around the boy in front of her.

Safety first, something pipes up inside of her with a distant sort of laugh.

He twitches, turning to give her a strange look, and Katsuki blinks at him, fingers curling into the front of his shirt as she tilts her head.

Dabi throws another roll of blue flames into the path of Tomura before hauling himself up and the monster roars beneath them, shifting on all four before it lurches into movement.

“This is so bizarre,” Katsuki mutters, tightening her grip on Half-n-Half as she jerked with the movement, twisting a bit to press her face into the back of his neck as her stomach rolled, a low miserable groan escaping her.

Half-n-Half smells like ash and frost, not nearly as comforting as Dabi but grounding all the same and she ignores the way his muscles ripple as she tightens her grip.

There’s a roar, voices around her, loudness and the explosive force of

two power houses and Katsuki really, really wants to *wake up* because nothing of this is making *any* sense and-

“Cover her ears,” Dabi’s voice reaches her and Katsuki blinks a bit blearily against Half-n-Half’s back as slim hands folds over her ears, quieting some of the *too much*.

Katsuki slumps forward and decides that it’s better to just not... think too much.

-

Katsuki finds herself tugged down, stumbling, body enfolded as she all but collapsed against Himiko-chan who nudged at her until Katsuki was sprawling against her back with her chin on the other girl’s shoulder.

The world tips and tilts around her as Half-n-Half draws Purple Guy’s stiff body off the monster. The front of his shirt is drenched with the blood dripping from his nose, his breathing laboured as he’s gently lowered down to rest against the wall of the alley they’d crammed into.

Katsuki feels for him – she does. He looks about as miserable as she feels.

“We need to burn it,” Half-n-Half says grimly. “Touya-“

“*That* is not my name anymore,” Dabi answers but he’s stepping up beside Half-n-Half. “On three?”

Half-n-Half nods, stretching out his left arm after a lingering look at the elder.

Katsuki half-lethargically counts along with them and then the world is exploding with red and blue flames that wraps around the creature, curling down its roaring mouth, skin popping and burning and *melting* as it lurched, limbs collapsing beneath it as it writhed on the ground.

“I’m going to vomit,” Katsuki informs Himiko-chan who yelps as she twists her head, stomach cramping and stomach acid dribbling a bit miserable out of her mouth before she spat.

Himiko-chan wrinkles her nose, shuffling them both away from it.

“I’m never doing that again,” Purple Guy groans where he sits, wiping

the blood from his mouth with his sleeve.

“Todoroki! Shinsou!” Katsuki turns with Himiko as two girl’s skid into alleyway on an electric *scooter* and if Katsuki’s day wasn’t strange enough already there’s fucking *earphone jacks* dangling from the ears of one of them.

“Temporary truce,” Half-n-Half says with a step that puts him in front of Dabi when they both zero on him and Himiko-chan. “More importantly,” he says when they jump off the scooter, removing matching helmets and letting them clatter to the ground. “What’s wrong with Bakugou?”

Katsuki finds herself in the middle of suddenly far too much attention and she loops her arm a bit awkwardly around Himiko-chan who lifts a hand to pat against her head.

“It’s okay, Kasu-chan,” she says and Katsuki *strongly* disagrees.

“Don’t know,” Dabi answers reluctantly. “All For One... he got her on his own and when we reached her she was like this.”

Katsuki thinks it’s a bit unfair that *she’s* somehow become the oddity here, all things considered.

She turns her head as the girl with the dark hair steps towards her and there’s something... gentle about her. She wearing jeans and a dark thick jacket open to reveal a white loose belly shirt and her booted feet are quiet against the ground which Katsuki kinda appreciates.

She’s not quite over the fact that she’s hearing anything *at all*.

“Do you recognise me?”

“Should I?” Katsuki asks a bit dubiously, eyes shifting and lingering on her ponytail. “I’m quite sure I haven’t seen *any* of you before.”

“But you know who *you* are?” Half-n-Half asks with a tilt of his head, mismatched eyes lingering on her. One grey, the other as turquoise and pretty as Dabi’s.

Katsuki opens her mouth but the world choses that moment to tilt around her and she wheezes out, colour and noise twisting together into a mess that she can’t make sense of because-

She’s *Katsuki* but-

There's another name, wrapped and tangled in *too much* and she chokes, legs folding beneath her but-

She doesn't hit the ground because an arm loops around her chest, lowering her the last of the way and-

The ground is cold, and then it's warm, it's hard and then it's rough, straw coloured grass prickling against her skin, and then the ground is dry, and then it's wet, and it's *raining* and-

Something presses down over her ears and Katsuki jerks, fingers curling around plastic and-

It's *quiet*.

The relief bubbles through her, coiling through her veins and soothing the jagged pieces of her mind.

-

Momo breathes out in relief, shoving a hand into her pocket to grasp for one of the extra protein bars she'd brought as Bakugou curled on herself.

"Good thinking," Shinsou says to Jirou, wiping at the blood still dripping from his nose with a grimace.

"She looked like she needed a moment," Jirou says with a shrug and an unreadable glance at Bakugou who'd curled up on herself.

It makes for such a strange picture, Momo thinks. The anti-thesis of everything Bakugou was supposed to be.

Momo presses her hand against her belly again and this time, instead of noise cancelling headphones, she draws out two cotton tampons and offers them up to a brief blink of purple eyes.

"Thanks." Shinsou quite unceremoniously shoves them up his nose. "I'm tanked," he admits with a grimace. "I'm going to have such a migraine tomorrow," he mutters, pushing up, one hand flat against the wall of the building to keep himself steady.

"That's quite the handy power," Dabi drawls and Momo pauses as his eyes focus on her, wary, because he's still and unknown and she doesn't quite know what to make of him but- "Thank you," he says, shifting his gaze back to Bakugou as Momo nearly chokes on her bar.

“Of course,” she gets out, swallowing it down. *A polite Villain?*

“How are you alive?” Todoroki steps forward to the Villain who tilts his head, eyes never leaving Bakugou. “They told me you *died*.”

“Obviously I didn’t,” Dabi drawls. “And what does it matter anyway? We hardly ever saw each other.” Despite his words there’s no clear antagonism in his voice, his eyes unfathomable as he looks up at Todoroki.

“It matters because you’re my *brother*.” Momo shifts because she’s never heard Todoroki sound so *young*, he was always so sharp and composed no-matter the situation. But his face is twisting up as he steps towards Dabi. “Do you have any idea how much Fuyumi mourns you?” he demands. “Natsuo hardly ever visits because-“

“Because our *father* is an abusive asshole,” Dabi interrupts heavily and blue flames licks briefly up his scarred arms before smothering out.

This close the matching scars on Katsuki’s body is undeniable, the same sort of gnarly purple stretch of ruined skin.

Momo exchanges a look with Jirou, not quite sure what to make of the situation, and the other girl shrugs with a brief grimace.

“Todoroki.” Jirou raises her hand with a small wave. “As interesting as this is your family reunion will have to wait. All Might is facing that Villain and there’s no knowing how far the destruction will spread and there are more Noumu about.” She looks to their classmates, something troubled in her gaze. “And Bakugou is really in no-state to go *anywhere*.”

“I will carry her,” Dabi says immediately and Momo gets the feeling that disagreeing with him wouldn’t result in anything good.

It’s alarming, all things considered, Momo acknowledges to herself. But Dabi is also the only one of them who could reasonably carry Bakugou and keep a decent pace. Shinsou is out and Todoroki is actually smaller than Bakugou who is both taller and more muscular.

She might be able to create something but it had been risky just making the electric scooter and it was small and meant to draw as little attention to them as possible. Not carry someone half out of it.

Shinsou takes a step forward and despite the blood on his shirt and the tiredness that hangs of him he meets the eyes of the Villain

without fear.

"I don't trust you," he says bluntly. "I've seen the scars on Bakugou's body. I know you're the cause of them."

"I am," the Villain admits with a curl of his lips that pulls at the metal that bites into his skin. "Not that it's any of your business. It's something between Katsuki and I and if you don't understand that you don't know her nearly as well enough as you think."

Shinsou stills, eyes darkening.

"I've known her for more than four years, long before she met any of you." Dabi turns his head in clear dismissal, fingers reaching out and brushing over dusty blonde spikes with a gentleness that is downright startling to behold. "There's no-one who knows her better."

"Kasu-chan is *ours*," Toga proclaims with clear smugness as she steps closer to them, one hand pressing down against Dabi's back to half-lean against him, her yellow eyes glittering with a promise of danger.

"Well, well, well – this is quite the gathering." Momo doesn't even have time to turn around before something flashes past her and Hawks tilts his head, knife missing, an entertained little smile on his lips as Dabi rose, Toga already palming a second knife with a little cock of her head.

Momo steps back and closer to Bakugou, Todoroki and Shinsou both echoing her.

"I didn't even hear him," Jirou mutters with a glance towards the Number Three Hero.

Hawks is looking at Dabi, a considering little gleam in his eyes. "I'm not here to fight," he says, folding his arms behind his head in a loose relaxed stance. "Imagine my surprise when I caught sight of *two* U.A. students riding astride a Noumu. Quite impressive and very gutsy that. And now there's *five* and two Villains to boot."

"And?" Dabi drawls. "What are you going to do Mr. Pro-Hero?"

"You can call me Hawks, handsome." Hawks flashes a flirty little wink.

Dabi gives him a highly unimpressed look while Toga bristles. "Dabi belongs to Kasu-chan!"

“The kid?” Hawks glances down towards Bakugou. “That’s a can of worms I didn’t expect,” he hums. “Anyone ever tell you that predatory behaviour is terribly unsexy?” His head tilts, gaze deceptively blank, for Momo feels her skin prickle in response and she’s not even the target of it.

“As if I care what a *Hero* thinks,” Dabi rolls his neck. “This has nothing to do with *you*.”

“My orders, in particular, was to secure the kid,” Hawks disagrees. “More importantly, what’s wrong with him?”

“*Her*,” Dabi corrects with a lidded look.

“Her, then,” Hawks agrees with a shrug. “Any reason why she’s all curled up with headphones on while you’re all standing around debating?”

“Something is wrong with her,” Momo steps in before Dabi can open his mouth. “We don’t know why but she’s... She didn’t recognise us.”

“No?” Hawks gives Dabi a brief look before rolling his shoulders, wings shifting and folding properly on his back. “Well, I’m not a Pro-Hero for nothing. Mind if I talk to her?”

Dabi gives him a long look. “Do anything suspicious and I’ll *burn you*.”

“Yeah, yeah, hot stuff.” Hawks waves a dismissive hand, trotting deeper into the alley as Dabi shifted, eyes sharp as the Pro-Hero crouched down in front of Bakugou.

Reaches out and taps the knuckles of his index and middle finger gently against her cheek.

-

Katsuki reluctantly raises her head, blinking at yet another stranger, half-certain that humans weren’t supposed to have *wings*.

“Hey here,” she reads on his lips. “Do you know who I am?”

“No,” Katsuki says dully, curling her arms tighter around herself. “Should I?”

“Well, I am pretty famous,” the winged-man tells her, blond with messy hair and scruff on his chin. “Admittedly not as famous as All Might but being the Number Three Hero isn’t too shabby, if I do say so

myself.”

Katsuki gives him a flat look.

“There’s no such thing as Heroes,” she disagrees, her own voice coming out muffled.

He tilts his head. “No?”

“Just in stories,” Katsuki clarifies because apparently the world had gone mad around her and she isn’t too interested in playing along with it. “And- I’m dead anyway so this is just... this is just some weird dream isn’t it?” She glances towards his wings and then down, biting down on her lip and nudging at the headphones just enough to bare one ear.

“How can you be dreaming if you’re dead?” he asks her.

“I don’t know,” Katsuki draws tighter on herself. “But it’s the only thing that *does* make sense, isn’t it?”

“You’re not dead,” Dabi says from behind the winged-man.

“I feel dead,” Katsuki mutters, her right hand curling around the headphones. “He *killed me*. I know he did. And I-“

“You lived,” Dabi interrupts her and she doesn’t understand the look in his eyes, her mouth thinning a bit unsurely. “What is your name?”

“Katsuki,” she says a bit haltingly but the name twists strangely on her tongue. “I’m- there’s another name but-“ She hunches forward. “Nothing is making any *sense*.”

“I have to agree with you there,” the winged-man agrees with false lightness. “Anyone want to clue me in?”

“Kasu-chan had another life.” Himiko waves her hand a bit absently, yellow eyes fixed on Katsuki. “She died and then she *lived*.”

“How old are you?” Dabi presses, taking a single step forward, just behind the winged-man who twitches slightly but his smile doesn’t waver.

“Twenty-two,” Katsuki answers but it doesn’t feel quite *right*. “I was twenty-two when he- I don’t understand.” She looks up imploringly because she’s quite tired of the topsy-turvy threading of the world. “He was my *best friend* and he-“

“Killed you,” Dabi agrees heavily. “You told me as much.”

“Oh.” Katsuki gives him an unsure look before looking to the winged-man. “Everything is wrong and I’m... I’m confused,” she admits to him. “I think... I think the man with the metal helmet he... it *hurt*.” Her hand curls into her hoodie above her heart. “I think... I think he *took something* from me.”

“I bet,” the winged-man says, “you feel all out of sorts with yourself right now.”

“It’s raining,” Katsuki confides. “I don’t like it when it rains. It rained when he... and he just *left me*. In the rain. And.” Her fingers dig into her chest, which is *wrong*, because it’s flat when it shouldn’t be and her world wavers and tips a bit oddly around her until she slowly removes it, curling it the fabric of her jeans instead.

“I have no idea what’s going on with you,” the winged-man tells her bluntly, dropping his chin into the palm of his hand and Katsuki blinks at him. “But according to your files rain is a pretty bad trigger for you.”

“Oh,” Katsuki whispers, not really understanding but- “Okay.”

His lips loop into a little smile. “It’s going to be alright, kid.” He floofs the hair on her head.

“I’m not a kid,” Katsuki grumbles but doesn’t bat it away – it feels kinda nice, somehow. “I’m-“ The world loops and wavers and she blinks between yellow eyes and brown, blond hair and wet dark strands.

“Don’t strain yourself.” He straightens out. “It’s not really safe to remain here,” he says to the gathering of people and Katsuki buries her head back into his arms, disliking the many eyes watching her, not sure what to make of their expression and wanting nothing to do with it. “We honestly risk being in the way because the sheer destruction All Might and that masked Villain is causing is pretty severe. So, we should really be thinking of booking it.”

“I hope you’re not actually conspiring with Villains, Hawks,” a new voice says gruffly and Katsuki raises her head to see an enormous man with *fire* for a beard step into the alley, eyes hard and unforgiving as he looked over them all, his shadow stretching down from the darkening skies behind him.

Something curls inside of her and Katsuki doesn't understand the feeling that spreads through as she looks between Dabi and the new arrival.

"Endeavour," Dabi breathes, mouth curling and a feverish sort of mania creeping into his eyes.

There's loathing in his voice, something deep and visceral that had buried deep enough to grow gnarled and old.

They have the same eyes, something inside of her notes with a lilting sort of resignation and a sigh.

Chapter End Notes

Me, welcoming you all to this shit show: sup, dudes?

I hope you're all seated and that you're watered and fed and ready because oh boy. There's some family reunion time coming up and not the fun kind.

Did I mention we're far from done with the Rescue Arc? Yes. Yes, I believe I did.

Katsuki still isn't having a very fun time - she's having a very miserable time, as it is, and the world has quite stopped making sense around her and she's a bit all over the place with her feelings on the matter.

I can't believe I've actually caught up to your comments - I'm feeling very happy with myself. I'm gonna back-track and answer the ones from the last chapter after work tomorrow since I really need some sleep before that.

You all make me so happy and warm, I cannot tell you enough, and I love your speculations and thoughts and just <3

ALSO shout-out to your peeps over at tumblr who like and reblog my links bcs it never fails to make me wanna do a spin.

I hang about there as artsy-death if you're around and this has been chapter 32 of In The End.

I hope you enjoyed!

Nitroglycerin

Chapter Notes

Ponytail = Yaoyorozu

Purple Guy = Shinsou

Half-n-Half = Todoroki

Punk = Jirou

《Hey》 = sign-language

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Tooru pads through the top floor in thick sweats and a comfy sweater, both in grey with TOKYO METROPOLIS POLICE DEPARTMENT on the chest and down the arms and legs. The cat headed police officer, who had introduced himself as Sansa after Aizawa-sensei quite unceremoniously dropped her off with a firm and very stern look after she'd tried to cram in what she knew to him, had even found her a pair of thick socks and a cup of hot chocolate which she cradles thankfully in her hands.

She'd been left to her own device after she had assured Sansa that, no, she wasn't planning on ducking out. For one, she had no idea where anyone had gone to, and two-

Tooru stops, looking out the window to the dark skies and the dust rising in the far off distance.

... They had more important things to deal with. Like the fact that Bakugou, Todoroki, Jirou, Shinsou and Yaomomo were still out there somewhere among Noumus and Villains and it's hard not to feel useless in the face of it.

Tooru closes her eyes.

She finds some regret in giving Aizawa-sensei her ear piece. Tooru might be a smidge annoyed at Bakugou for bruising her ribs and leaving with the Villains but there'd been desperation in those crimson eyes of the other girl and... she didn't deserve her secrets spilling out in the way they were.

Tooru can only do so much and she knew she couldn't *not* tell Aizawa at least the basics of it, and he'd promised her he'd do his best to reel in the fallout of it which Tooru had to trust, at least. But she still feels

like she's betrayed Bakugou's trust in doing so, even for her safety, even to get her back to them.

Tooru can keep a secret and she's determined to keep this one and she thinks the rest of them are, too. But there's no changing what she now knows – that Bakugou had, apparently, lived a life before this.

Tooru lifts her head, glancing to her left when she picks up a familiar voice through closed doors and only hesitates for a moment before trotting her way over and pushing it open, slipping inside as heads turned around to look at her.

She finds four people inside and Tooru pauses at the sight of them, blinking at Midoriya beside a brown haired man seated beside a woman that could only be Bakugou's mother (which was a bit of a doozy because was she really Bakugou's mother if she wasn't really their son?).

And there, head craned around, pale and tense and squished up against the woman is *Ashido*.

"Hagakure!?" the pink skinned girl squeaks out, eyes widening, and Tooru raises her hand in a wave, missing her gloves since she relied a lot on hand gestures to clarify her moods without a face to translate it. But at least the sleeves of her sweater are long and she thinks she gets the point across.

"Heya," she greets, awkwardness threading through her.

"Oh, you're that girl that got trapped with Katsuki." Bakugou's mother (and Tooru decides that it's just easier to think of her as so, no matter the mess of things) looks tired – bags beneath her eyes and there's a stretched sort of wan look to her.

It's actually a bit startling how much she looks like Bakugou – the same eyes, the same dusty blonde spikes, longer than Bakugou's but not by much. She's older, her features sharper, and there's a femininity to her that Bakugou doesn't have with the slope of her chest further accentuated by the pale lavender sweater and skirt that brushes past her knees.

There's the fact that Bakugou is far more muscular as well but-

Given what Tooru now knows of Bakugou it's hard not to compare them and Tooru knows that the body she's in doesn't make Bakugou any less of a woman. It's easy enough to accept and adjust to the new

pronouns and Tooru does spend a moment to wonder what to wonder what Bakugou might look like with make-up to accentuate her eyes as she looks at this woman.

"I am," Tooru agrees, wondering how much she could tell as she glances to the television screen where All Might is facing down who Tooru could only assume was the Villain behind Bakugou getting kidnapped in the first place. "What are you doing here, Midoriya?" she asks curiously because he's the obvious displaced one here because Bakugou had made her dislike of him pretty clear.

"Oh-" Midoriya ducks his head. "I'm... behaving," he says with a strange look at Ashido who snorts. "What about you, Hagakure-san?" he asks with a searching look. "You-"

Tooru makes a decision, making sure the door was closed behind her before claiming the armchair beside the couch and leaning forward with her elbows on her knees. "I got Bakugou out," she says very, very bluntly and Bakugou's mother inhales sharply, her father straightening up, and Ashido's head jerks up with a desperate sort of look.

"What-"

"He-" It leaves a bit of a bad taste in her mouth by the misgendering but Tooru decides that it's not her place to clarify things that Bakugou had clearly kept secret, "was tied up in the Villains hide-out. I snuck inside, got him out of it. I don't know where he is now but... He's got a chance. I gave Aizawa-sensei my ear piece and... Todoroki, Yaomomo, Shinsou and Jirou are all with him."

"They're not the only ones," Bakugou's mother observes but there's relief in her face. "Dabi and Toga-"

"I only heard so much but they're... I think they're trying to keep him safe, at least." Which was another can of worm entirely but at least Bakugou hadn't ditched her for people who didn't, on some level, care for her back.

"Thank you," Bakugou's mother says with such empathetic sincerity that Tooru finds herself very glad no-one can read the guilt on her face.

"We haven't introduced ourselves. Hagakure, was it?" Bakugou's father says.

"Hagakure Tooru!" She perks up. "You can call me Tooru-chan," she

offers a bit cheekily.

“Masaru,” he tells her with a kind sort of smile. “And this is my wife, Mitsuki.”

“Masaru-san, Mitsuki-san,” she agrees easily enough.

“I can’t believe you got him out,” Ashido breathes and there’s a strange mix of emotions in her eyes as she looks down at her clenched hands.

Tooru resolves to talk to her once they’re both out of earshot of Bakugou’s parents because it *had* been unfair to leave her out of it, to not even let her know they were going to try and get Bakugou out. But Ashido...

She’d been too close to the situation, they’d reasoned, and Tooru agrees with it, on some level, but she still feels guilty about it.

“Was he-“ Ashido swallows. “How was he?” she asks finally. “The Villains-“

“He was still Bakugou,” Tooru tries to reassure. “Scowling and picking a fight with the hand-guy, Shigaraki.”

Mitsuki breathes out. “Of course he was,” she says with a touch of fond exasperation as Masaru reaches out and Tooru looks away as they grasp at each other’s hands with a desperate soft of relief.

“That’s good.” Ashido looks to the screen as Midoriya hunkers down, his eyes focused with teeth sinking into his lower lip as All Might skids back, form rippling with tension as he blocked an enormous large twisted construction of the Villain and Tooru’s eyes narrows because-

All Might is the Symbol of Peace – the stabilizing pillar of society. He’s always been *there* for as long as she can remember, just a small tot in front of the television screen as he rose from the wreckage with a smile that instilled hope and comfort to those who saw it.

She’d been *ecstatic* when she learn that he’d be one of her teachers at U.A. It was one of those once in a life time happenings and she’d soaked up every kind word he took to spare her during lessons with him.

But then she’d seen Bakugou get carted off in the aftermath of the

final exam and she hadn't felt... very good about it. Because Bakugou had been *really* hurt. In a way that Tooru hadn't seen even Villains get out of clashes with the Number One Hero.

Tooru doesn't understand it – can't *begin* to wrap her mind about it. And maybe some of her guilt in the aftermath of it still lingered because she *had* wondered, even briefly, if... maybe, just maybe, All Might *saw* something in Bakugou's anger and deemed it dangerous.

Maybe Bakugou *wasn't* supposed to be a Hero? Maybe All Might *saw* something and-

Tooru had felt terrible about it and the knowledge of even having had those doubts eases some of the anger at Bakugou for bruising her ribs and leaving her to Aizawa-sensei's mercies despite her classmate having no idea of it ever having crossed her mind.

"How's he doing?" Tooru asks, worry coiling through her because All Might...

He was clearly *struggling* and Midoriya... there's something with the look in his eyes that makes Tooru narrow her own.

It's no secret that there is *something* between Midoriya and All Might that made them close enough that Midoriya was often picked up to have lunch together. Tooru strongly suspected that All Might had had a hand in training the green haired boy, their fighting styles and quirks were similar enough to make so much clear.

Her emotions on the matter is tangled. She feels cheated, for one, because it felt like – she didn't *measure up*. She knew her quirk wasn't flashy and she would never be the winner of the Sports Festival or stand as the Number One Hero but... Her quirk wasn't useless. She'd proved it, hadn't she? She'd infiltrated the League of Villains and gotten Bakugou out before the Pro-Heroes had even arrived.

But she'd gone to U.A. knowing that the world clearly favoured those with more flashy executions.

It didn't make it easier to accept that All Might appeared to be of the same mind but Aizawa-sensei was *brilliant* and he didn't let *anyone* step over him. Tooru admired him and she was *relieved* he'd been given as their teacher because he clearly didn't agree with it and circumvented the system when he could.

Sometimes Tooru wished... for more? She supposed. But still...

Midoriya was All Might's student, his favourite, and it had never been clearer to Tooru that something had gone clearly wrong with it when Midoriya limped a bit bruised and battered but *okay* beside the bleeding and unconscious form of Bakugou who wheezed for breath.

But All Might is still *All Might*.

Tooru admired him, what he had done and represented, and it was absolutely *impossible* to wrap her mind around All Might doing anything but *winning*.

But Midoriya is clearly worried, which is fair, Tooru is too, but it's *All Might*...

Ashido's mouth curls, something dark brushing momentarily through her gaze and Mitsuki reaches out to put a hand on her shoulder with a squeeze.

"He's going to win." Midoriya raises his head. "He has to," he says with a quiet sort of achy conviction.

"Yeah," Tooru agrees, focusing back on the screen as her teeth sunk into the inside of her cheek.

-

There's something ugly in his brother's eyes, Shouto thinks as he looks between Touya and Endeavour.

He shifts where he stands just a step or two from his brother as their father's eyes drag over them, taking in the situation, judging. The other Villain, Toga, spins a knife idly in her hand as she slinks up on Touya's other side, still close to Bakugou, her yellow eyes glinting with curiosity and judgement alike.

"This the one you want to kill, Dabi?" she asks, pink spreading across her cheeks and anticipation clear.

Endeavour narrows his eyes. "Shouto." He stills, turning warily towards his father. "You are not supposed to be here." Eyes the same colour as Touya's, the same colour as his own left one, fixates upon him and Shouto tenses instinctively.

Endeavour's attention has never meant anything good and Shouto knows he's going to be paying dearly for this.

But despite that he can't get himself to regret it. Bakugou needed his help and Touya – his *brother* is alive and Shouto refuses to let him stand against Endeavour on his own. He's tired of being afraid and he's tired of mourning and he's tired of constantly finding himself in the shadow of his father.

Midoriya had shown him that he was more, that he was his own person. Things had changed ever since the Sports Festival, in more ways than one.

For a long time it had only been he and Fuyumi left to face the wrath of their father but before that Touya had stood on his own, as the oldest.

Shouto refuses to allow history to repeat itself.

They're not children anymore.

"Do not involve yourself in the business of others, *Villain*," Endeavour's voice coils dangerously.

"And if I make it my business?" Touya challenges with a stretching of his lips. "Endeavour, the Number Two Hero, always second best in the shadow of *All Might*." He cocks his head with a lilting sort of smirk. "I would say it's a pleasure but I think we both agree it's not."

Endeavour narrows his eyes, the fire flaring briefly on his face before settling, a glowering undercurrent of danger as studies the Villain.

"Hey, hey – Endeavour." Hawks folds his wings properly against his back, trotting up unafraid towards the other Hero with a glint in his eyes. "All Might is still fighting, we need to get the kids out of here and–"

"We have Villains to deal with, Hawks," Endeavour interrupts, not sparing him a glance.

"Sure," Hawks agrees without faltering. "But they've already made it clear they won't hurt the kids so if we can just move..." Hawks makes a sweeping sort of gesture with his hand, head tilting.

Shouto already knows that Endeavour won't view that as a priority. He had always been more focused on catching Villains than involving himself in saving civilians. He had the highest count of Villain captures for a reason – even higher than All Might who had been around for longer.

“Oh he won’t,” Touya drawls, eyes shifting to the winged Hero with a smile curved with dark amusement. “Endeavour doesn’t care who he steps over as long as it means he gets to capture the bad guy. He’ll leave you to *die* if it suits his intentions. No one would question the Number Two Hero, would they? Society adores him, after all.”

There’s bitterness in his voice but also something sharp and venomous.

What happened to you, Touya? Shouto finds himself wondering, eyes lingering.

His brother had never been cruel but Shouto understands his anger all too well.

“This Hero Society?” Touya’s voice rolls out heavy as he spreads his hands. “It has become nothing more than a media playground and the worst sort of capitalism – gambling on lives for money and fame. *Everyone* is happy as long as they get to see real-life Heroes, aren’t they?” A feverish sort of light enters his eyes. “Nevermind those falling through the cracks because it’s not *worth* playing Hero to those born to bad lots in life. Isn’t worth paying attention to those born with the wrong sort of *quirk*.”

Shouto remembers Touya as he was – small with a head of tufty white hair. Touya had been born with a body made for their mother’s quirk but he had inherited their father’s and Shouto couldn’t recall a portion of their childhood where Touya hadn’t been wrapped up in bandages because of it.

Bad constitution, Endeavour had called it, eyes dark and unforgiving at the dining table. *A pity*.

“There are children growing up right now who won’t be spared a second of attention because their quirks doesn’t *measure up* and meanwhile those with *right ones* are just greedy front figures whose wrongs will be hidden as long as media is allowed to love them.” Touya takes a step forward, bright blue flames licking up his arms. “I’m going to raze it to the *ground*.”

-

“Hey-” Katsuki scrambles for a name, snags on the black hair and- “*Ponytail*.” The right girl turns sharply towards her and Katsuki has to be smug about that – she’d always been good at picking out distinctive traits, a bit unconventional in her naming but it wasn’t like most were

able to understand or use the names she gave them anyway.

Whatever she was here, in the world, reality, whatever the *fuck* was going on, her names had stuck around and it might be a dream or a really vivid hallucination but it was grounding all the same.

“You-“ For a second something like hope climbs through her dark gaze but then it shifts with realization and a brief glint of curiosity. “Of course that wouldn’t change. Why Ponytail, though?” she asks and Katsuki blinks at her as she crouches down, arms folded at her knees.

There are words being exchanged behind her and Katsuki thinks that, maybe they should be paying attention to that, should be watching Dabi, but-

She reaches out and brushes her fingers over the little arch of black strands which is allowed with a curious tilt of her head. “’s pretty,” she tells the other girl honestly. “Different – easy to remember.”

To her surprise pink touches the pale cheeks of Ponytail. “Thank you,” she murmurs, mouth curling soft and pretty.

“I’m guessing I’m back to Purple Guy again then,” the purple haired boy says with some exasperation, sparing her a brief glance as she looks up to him, his shoulders tense.

“FNAF was a good game, fucked up, but good,” she tells him sincerely. “I’ll forever associate purple with it and you’ve got plenty of it.”

He gives her a dry look, shifting, and then his hands rises and Katsuki jerks up, eyes widening because-

《*Purple Mind.*》

“The name you gave me,” he says with an unreadable look. “You don’t much like my quirk. My power,” he clarifies when she gives him a bit of a lost look.

“It’s what allows me to this.” Ponytail presses a hand against her bare stomach and Katsuki *stares* because that’s-

“How?” she breathes, fingers touching against a tiny little pink and purple raccoon with a soft smile coming unbidden to her face as it was dropped into her hands and she draws it close, admiring it’s dark sclera and vivid gold eyes with a brush of her index finger between tiny ears.

Raccoon Eyes, the something inside of her aches with longing that ghosts through her.

“Quirks,” Ponytail says with a considering look. “Keep it,” she says when Katsuki makes a move to hand it back. “I can always make more.”

Katsuki hesitates but slips it into her pocket and strokes her palm over the small lump.

“So – quirks allows people to do weird things?” she asks with a look at Endeavour. “You said I didn’t like your quirk which – are they individualized? How come those three have fire quirks then? *Who* is he anyway?” Katsuki asks, finally remembering her original question as she straightened up.

“Yes, quirks are all personal,” Ponytail explains patiently in an undertone while sparing a glance at the rising of Dabi’s voice. “In some cases a child inherits one of their parents’ quirks, sometimes they inherit from both to make a new quirk entirely. There are cases where there are no real explanation for the quirk of the child, it’s hard to tell. But even quirks that might look the same at first appearance have different limits and capacities.”

Katsuki lowers her head, mouth thinning.

“Then my hands- I made that man’s leg-“

“You sweat nitroglycerin.” Katsuki freezes where her palm had pressed down against the lump in her pocket, suddenly all too aware of the fact that she’d been pretty much smearing her hands *everywhere* and-

They did smell sweet, didn’t they? Like burnt sugar or caramel, and that wasn’t normal, it wasn’t what sweat was *supposed to smell like* and-

I’m a ticking time-bomb, Katsuki realises with a sick sense of horror as the colour drains from her face.

“How,” Katsuki asks with a desperate sort of feeling curling inside of her, “could you *ever* allow me outside.” Ponytail’s eyes widens and Punk and Purple Guy both snaps around to her but Katsuki is frozen stiff in terror as she tucks her hands into her armpits with a tremble. “I should be locked up,” she says feverishly. “I could blow this fucking street up. I could blow *myself* up- are you all *insane!*?”

“Bakugou-“ Ponytail says very very gently, one hand reaching out to touch her shoulder.

Katsuki flinches back.

“*Don’t touch me!*” she snarls, curling on herself and Ponytail stills. “I’m- I’m a fucking *bomb*. I’ve smeared that stuff all over me and there are *three* fire users gearing up to fight and-“ A mind blowing sort of terror claws through her and her mouth snaps shut on a wheezing breath because- “I’m covered in it,” she breathes. “I’m covered in nitroglycerin and-“ Red eyes snaps up, zeroing on the first burst of blue flames, pupils dilating to pinpricks.

“Himiko-chan-“ she gasps out and the yellow eyed girl stills where she’d stepped forward as Half-n-Half raised his voice in the background, ice spreading out over the walls as the winged-man flared his wings. “*Himiko-chan-*“

“Kasu-chan?” The other girl turns towards her as Katsuki presses herself back against the wall, using it to keep herself upright as she struggled to her feet.

“I-“ She digs her nails into her skin through the fabric of the hoodie, so hard she knows she’s going to leave bruises behind and so very unable to *care*. “I need to get out of here! I need- I’m *covered in it*.” She stumbles side-ways, nearly falls, jerking out of the path of hands that tries to stabilize her and latching onto the yellow eyes of Himiko-chan because-

Because-

“Himiko-chan *please*,” Katsuki gasps as she hunches on herself because she can’t do this on her own, she *can’t*, and she’s-

What’s wrong with this world, Katsuki wonders desperately where she stands in the middle of an alleyway with four children, two people claiming to be *Heroes*, Dabi and Himiko-chan branded as *Villains* (and Katsuki doesn’t know what to make of anything because the something in her mind considers Dabi and Himiko-chan *good* and there’s an uneasy dislike at the sight of the Hero *Endeavour* and what even is *sense* in any of this?).

Her brain is buzzing, her skin is dry despite the rain, she stinks of burnt sugar and she can’t make her hands stop leaking fucking *nitroglycerin*. Her body isn’t her body, she’s not *stupid*, she feels the weight between her legs and the lack of weight on her chest and she’s-

she's not *stupid*.

This isn't her body.

But she's in it all the same.

"Go!" Half-n-Half slams his foot down, ice exploding out between Dabi and Endeavour as Katsuki stares up in a bleak sort of shock because *what*. "Dabi- Bakugou *needs you!*"

Katsuki does *not* because she's a fucking *bomb* and she does not want or need flames anywhere near her person, thank you very fucking much.

Turquoise eyes snaps towards her all the same and Katsuki stills, trembling and pale and terrified out of her fucking *mind*.

"Shit," Dabi growls out, and the ice is already melting because red and yellow flames are exploding high on the other side of it and Katsuki lets out a miserable sort of noise as she twists around from it.

And then Himiko-chan is there, hand wrapping around her bicep, hauling Katsuki along as she struggles to keep her footing as the ground wavers between asphalt and straw coloured grass and the kids are, too, and *does not a single person around her have an inch of self-preservation?*

"What's wrong?" Himiko-chan demands, knife held securely in her hand and an unhappy look on her face as she glanced back.

"I'm sweating fucking nitroglycerin that's what's wrong!" Katsuki gasps out as she's dragged around the corner. "I'm fucking covered in it! I can't make it *stop*."

"You could before." Himiko-chan's hand slides down, wrapping around her wrist and dragging her hand up to show glistening palms, ignoring Katsuki's attempts to draw it back down. "Can't you just shut them off?" She gives Katsuki's hand a little wave, not appearing to grasp the severity of the situation *at all*.

"How!?" Katsuki demands furiously because nitroglycerin is fucking *unstable*, she remembers so much from chemistry class and- "There's no fucking *off* switch-"

Something sparks at the very tip of her hand in response to her rising emotions and Katsuki's world explodes, her back hitting the wall *hard*

with a snap before she crumbled to the ground and she whines as she curls around her hands, peering up to find that Himiko-chan had, at least, managed to duck beneath the blast, her hair slightly singed and eyes wide.

“Make it *stop*,” Katsuki pleads because this isn’t okay, this isn’t funny, this is so far from acceptable that Katsuki wants to vomit, shaking as her heart pounds too hard and too fast inside her chest. “*Please-*”

“Okay-“ It’s Ponytail again, a worried crease to her brow and one hand stretched out without touching. “It’s- it’s going to be okay, Bakugou, alright?”

Katsuki kinda disagrees and she curls tighter on herself in response, feeling the wet slick and sting of the nitroglycerin in her nose.

Chapter End Notes

You do not want to know how many pages I ended up writing that just... wasn't right. I think I'm just overthinking it at this point because it does everything I wanted it to do so aaaaah.

Yeah, heya, long time no see!

Honestly, nitroglycerin is something I'd never want to sweat - it's not a fun thing at all, things considered, and without Kacchan's memories to lend her a hand...

Yeah, not a fun seat to be in at all.

I kinda hc that most kids have weaker quirks when they're young and that it sorta picks up with puberty. Children don't sweat as much as adults, for example, and there's just a lot of stuff happening with hormones and things and yeaaaah, here we are.

I haven't forgotten about Masaru and Mitsuki of course, and we get a brief glimps of them here along with Ashido and Midoriya because that's how we're rolling here. Sorta, threading the pieces together? One at the time?

I've been so bothered by this chapter that I haven't found the time to go back and respond and I am sorry about that but I'll try to find some time in the week to do it! But know that I adore each and everyone of you and you're just - a blessing.

I hang about tumblr as artsy-death if you want to say hello there

and this has been chapter 33 of In The End (noted as chapter 33.8 in my docs, I just realised, better not overthink that part).

I hope you enjoyed!

Ash

Chapter Notes

Half-n-Half = Todoroki

Ponytail = Yaoyorozu

Punk = Jirou

《Hey》 = sign-language

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

The part of Katsuki that isn't busy spiralling over the fact that she's, somehow, become a *living bomb*, is kind of distantly aware of a shift of the air and-

One second she's looking into the dark eyes of Ponytail and the next she *isn't*. Because there's black fog sputtering and flickering and she sees Tomura step through, as easy as can be, hands buried deep into the hands of his pockets and the hand that had been covering his face sticking out of his back pocket.

(And Katsuki has opinions about the fashion in this world – she's quite sure decapitated body parts had no business being anything *but* extra parts or, in the name of science, explored in such a way).

There's a rising wariness and curiosity alike from the something in her chest because *he returned* and *why*?

The kids, on the other hand, is looking rather like the devil had chosen to make his appearance and Katsuki knows that *appearance* had little to do with the capacity for *cruelty* because James had looked kind, hadn't he? With his wavy pale hair and glinting eyes, soft cheeked with a mouth meant for smiles and not frowns and-

He had killed her.

It feels like only moments ago she was choking out on a street and then there's rain and more rain and legs and Heroes and Villains and Quirks and *she's a living bomb*.

Katsuki doesn't think she's going to get over that part very soon, especially with how *flippantly* she'd been told about it because it wasn't *okay* it wasn't what normal people were supposed to do but she wasn't normal and she'd never adhered to a sense of normality

because it was a farce anyway, wasn't it and-

There's Tomura because it's a name, and she doesn't know why she doesn't give him another one but there's a tangling *wariness* and a beat of *dangerdangerdanger* and-

There's a masked man in a suit that reminds her of *Venom*, maybe, because Katsuki has always been a comic book fan and that's where *Heroes* and *Villains* belonged – in *stories* not this messed up reality that *hurts*, thrumming with the pull at her shoulder where old wounds rests and the jarring throbbing of her head from hitting the wall too hard and-

There's another one with a mask that doesn't look like any Hero or Villain she remembers, red button-down, black vest, black slacks and a mask that makes her brain hurt trying to decipher.

The kids aren't happy with their arrival and Ponytail is standing protectively in front of her, Purple Guy slowly straightening from where he'd been leaning against Punk, clearly exhausted with blood crusted beneath his nose and staining his shirt and-

There's the winged-man, too, *Hawks*, the something informs her, his wings singed and his eyes glinting with a strange sort of curiosity and Katsuki-

Katsuki looks at Tomura, her attention drawn in a way she can't understand to the red glower of his eyes, the crusted skin at his mouth, the scratch marks where his fingers had dug into his throat, red lines still visible in the split of skin.

He looks like *James*.

Like James had been when she met him, a year younger than herself with dirty smears across his nose and wiping sweat away from his forehead with his arm before collapsing down. Thin and a bit gangly, almost, fond of stories and bad jokes with a mouth that stretched at the responding laughter on the apple orchard where they worked and met.

Katsuki's head throbs and she clutches at her skull, dirty fingernails digging into the skin, the reek of nitroglycerin filling her nose, her head, her *heart*.

There's shouts, there's voices, there's Hawks with his wings spread wide and there's Toga in the middle of it all, a knife was grasped with

a twirl, feet shifting as she prepared to take on the winged *Hero* and-

Katsuki used to rest her head against his shoulder, curled up close on the small couch in their shared room, shoulders brushing, a fluttery little feeling in her chest as they debated over old issues of Wonder Woman and-

Katsuki chokes between one breath and the other, faces flickering, matching and mismatching, a strange gait twisting up with her memories of James confident stride and-

A four fingered grip curls into her hoodie and Katsuki finds herself yanked up, finds herself with red eyes flickering between blue, a ghostly whisper and the press of cold lips beneath the rain.

I'm sorry.

Her back hits a bricked wall, hand wrapping around her throat, a thumb careful not to touch even as he leans into her space.

Tomura smells like decay and ash and the something inside of her twists, nausea crawling up her throat and she feels the slick coldness of a knife between her ribs, the twist, the tearing, the choking feeling of blood filling up her lungs as she drowned and bled and *died*.

"I don't much appreciate having my plans ruined," Tomura's voice is husky, a promise of violence layered in the words as she stares at him. "You have, apparently, made quite the impression on my little team. They were quite insistent on not leaving you behind and so I return to find you curled upon yourself like a useless little thing."

Katsuki's fingers grasps to curl into his arm as he squeezes down, choking with a flash of-

"Look at me."

The world jerks into focus, her breath escaping her in a wheeze half-torn between terror and a rising unfamiliar sort of thing crawling and itching beneath her skin, her nails digging red lines into his flesh.

He presses closer, so close that all she can see is the red of his eyes, the pinpricks of his pupils in a sea of blood, the strange warmth of his hand against the chill of her throat.

The sounds drowns around away until all she can hear is the beating of her own heart, the terrified short breaths struggling through the

grasp on her windpipe and the calm, even breathing of the man in front of her.

“Do you remember what I’m capable of?” Tomura wonders, a glint in those heady eyes of his eyes. “I can remake you into what you’re supposed to be – nothing but ash and dust.”

Deaddeaddead.

“It would solve a lot of problems. It’s *tempting*. I’ve been wanting you for months now,” he tells her and she feels the way his thumb shifts closer, so close now that a single wrong twitch of her body would make his words reality. “Ever since I saw that beautiful rage that filled up your gaze, heady and intent and wanting *more* than this world will ever give you. But there’s none of that left in you right now, is there?”

He shifts ever so slightly back.

“Dabi is fighting, Toga is fighting, even those *precious* little classmates of you are fighting and you’re busy being consumed by your own *terror*.” His lips pull back. “*Pitiful*.”

“I-“ Katsuki grasps for words but they won’t come, there’s no defence to give, and she buries her nails deeper, desperation and something she doesn’t understand tangling inside of her and-

“Is this really what they’re risking their lives for?” Tomura’s voice is honey soft and she *hates it*.

She-

“I’m not supposed to be alive,” she gasps out. “I’m not supposed to-“

Something flashes in his eyes and then his hand left hand is splaying flat against her chest, all five-fingers pressing down, and Katsuki jerks because her hoodie crumbles, his palm registering warm for just a moment of time before agony tears through her in its place because her *skin is-*

Her body is-

-

There’s another name tickling at the back of her mind, the curling of hands from a man who has a kind smile and distant eyes, of a woman who tries but never quite manages to meet her half-way.

Cards signed with words never said, presents and money to cover for the absence of love.

She remembers being eight-years-old and curled on herself, the soft fur of her favourite toy hugged to her chest, recalling the shape of her mother's lips in anger and grief both.

There's frustration with videos never captioned, of peers who doesn't even try, the accompanying silence of the world around her as she watches the red light turn to green at the crossing of the street.

There's memories of falling in love, of falling out of love, her best friend and her lover both in the shape of his lips when he kneels above her on the street after his knife had slid between her ribs, tearing her open and leaving her to die.

-

I don't want-

-

There's hands that grasps her with the beeping of the hospital machine, her chest rising and falling even as her body struggles to shut down. Slumped figures, a man and a woman who looks at her with a desperate sort of love even as she can't stand the sight of them.

There's soft hesitant touches, carefully telegraphed, encouragement and arms that hold her tight when the rain falls outside and she's *drowningdrowningdrowning-*

A mother and father that doesn't really belong to her but meets her half-way when her own never could, who encourages her instead of trying to hide her, chiding words and the press of lips against her forehead and she *loves them, loves them, loves them* when she shouldn't because they aren't *hers-*

A palm flat against the mirror, an incomprehension at the face staring back at her because nothing is hers, she's living a *lie* and-

That first burn scar on her hip, fingers ghosting soft to press against it, the stranger in the mirror feeling a bit more like *her*.

There's a girl with blonde hair and a craving for blood, a responding softness in her own chest because she knows that it means to exist in a world that offers no understanding back.

Knees pressing down on either side of her hips, arms wrapping around her neck, a promise and a warning both as her mind is *tumblingtumblingtumbling*.

There's a girl with pink skin and golden eyes in a sea of black who prods and pokes and sees the jagged pieces of her reality and instead of asking, instead of pressing, offers an understanding that she doesn't know what to do with. Because love is dangerous but she wraps her arms around her back anyway because she's kind in a way that she doesn't understand but desperately wants to and-

There's more faces, more names, dark hair and tired eyes, blue eyes and the press of a soft chest as she's held, blond styled hair and lessons tailored to her, purple hair and fingers shaping clumsily, red and white and empathy and-

-

My body is-

-

There's a man who looks at her and meets her on her own terms, who grounds her into her new reality, his shoulder brushing up against hers where they lean to look down at the world, bruised and bleeding from flames and explosions both, a cigarette shared between them and her first snorted laughter as ash crumbles from the tip of it.

A claiming *mine*, hands and words showing her how to find pleasure in her new body, how to take it, how to *own it*.

Acceptance; uncomplicated and addicting.

-

The explosion bursts from her hand, violent and loud, blood splattering across her face, and Shigaraki laughs as she twists, violence coursing through her with a roaring in her ears and she snarls as she kicks him hard away from her.

She sinks to her knees, shutting down the sweat glands in her hands as she presses them against her chest, blood dripping down between her fingers from the ashy spread of ruin left by his quirk.

A tremble runs through her, mind scrambling, world snapping back to startling focus as the sound of rain cuts off completely.

“There you are!” Shigaraki laughs.

Katsuki spares him a glower before looking down, sees her muscles bare and throbbing and bleeding with ash clinging where her skin had been completely fucking *eradicated*. It’s ugly and messy and she grimaces as she brushes ash away with dirty fingers, her shirt and hoodie completely *gone*.

“You’re an asshole,” Katsuki growls, forcing herself to straighten up, mindless to how it pulls at what skin is left as she rolled her shoulders, trying to get a sense for how messed up her body is.

Her head throbs and she grits her teeth, mulishly biting down on any noise.

“I didn’t even let it go that deep.” Shigaraki’s arm dangles limp at his side where her explosion had torn his skin open in return and she takes some savage satisfaction in it even as his eyes gleam.

“How did you even know it’d work?” she demands.

“I didn’t.” Shigaraki husky voice is heavy with satisfaction. “I knew I’d take care of the problem one way or the other.”

“Right,” Katsuki mutters. “Fucking brilliant.”

There’s an hollow sort of achiness in her body, as if something had been *torn out* and it fucking *sucks* but Katsuki’s mind grasps at the pain and uses it make sense of the world because pain means she’s *alive*.

Everything else will just have to *wait*. Because she's exhausted and bleeding and her mind feels like it's been going through a fucking grinder and she's edging towards something dangerous.

But it has to *wait*. It has to because Katsuki can't afford anything else.

Her pants are wet with blood, she's quite possibly concussed and she wants nothing more than to lie down and sleep but that's not what she's going to do.

“This is a mess,” Katsuki raises her gaze, forcing herself to take in the situation going on behind Shigaraki as she drags a bloody hand through the strands of her hair. “Don’t take this the wrong way but *thank you*.”

Shigaraki stills for just a brief moment before he hums almost

curiously as he regards her beneath shaggy locks of pale blue hair.

He really does remind her of James. Off-hand, and if she squints a bit. She had preferred that realisation sticking where it belonged, deep down in the tangled memories of her death and other life. But it had been dredged up anyway and she doesn't quite know what to feel about it.

“You're one of mine now, Katsuki,” Shigaraki tells her, mouth stretching out. “Dabi and Toga belong to me which means you do too. This will all play out in my favour one way or the other. You're too *interesting* to simply leave be.”

Katsuki spits out a glob of blood to the ground, grimacing at the lethargy crawling through her limbs even the itching need of violence makes her fingers twitch.

Dissociating isn't new but it had been years since she experienced something so *severe*. Words spoken blur together in a mishmash of half-remembered flashes of eyes and hands and a hollow ringing inside her.

Mostly, the picture of Shinsou and Half-n-Half riding a fucking *Noumu* stands out in stark contrast to it all.

She looks up to Toga and Compress dodging around Hawks, at two of Twice squaring against Punk and Ponytail who had pressed back to back.

Meets Shinsou's eyes where he sits, bloody and tired but watching her with a vivid sort of sharpness.

《*Memories back*》 she informs him with a twist of her fingers.

《*You okay?*》

She blinks.

Shrugs because her chest is a horror show and blood loss is probably imminent and fucking All For One had *taken something from her* but she's not *dying*.

《*Half-n-Half and your-*》 Katsuki stares because he'd just drawn his palm down from his head with a pinch before pressing his index fingers together, turning and repeating it for *boyfriend* and she feels heat crawl up her cheeks 《*is with E-N-D-E-A-V-O-U-R in alley*》. He

tilts his head to where the distinctive blue flames of Dabi were roaring against red and yellow.

“Of course he is,” she breathes. “Fucking idiot.” She scrubs a tired hand over her cheek before slanting a look at the leader of the League of Villains because it’ll be a cold day in hell before she acknowledges All For One as anything of the sorts. “Are you planning on killing my classmates?”

Shigaraki raises a single brow at her, rocking back on his heels, one hand disappearing into his pocket with the thumb tucked against the palm of his hand.

“I’m just here to pick up what is mine.” Katsuki gives him a suspicious glare and his mouth tilts up in dark amusement. “Would you be more comfortable if we left him for your *Heroes*?” he asks of her and she stiffens. “Four walls, interrogation and jail time, that’s the only thing that awaits them. You aren’t playing on the same side, *Katsuki*.”

“I’m playing on my own fucking side,” Katsuki growls.

“And what will you do?” Shigaraki wonders. “Your secret is out in the open, there’s no telling you’re even allowed to become a Hero anymore. *Compromised*, I believe, is the word they’d use – it’s marked onto your very *skin*.”

Teeth indentions and dark hickeys – Shigaraki’s red eyes lingers on them with a look she doesn’t quite know how to place but makes the hair at the back of her neck stand on edge.

“Will you lie? Throw him under the bus? Make him your dirty little secret?” he taunts her, the dry flakes of his lips straining to remain as he smiled. “Everything has consequences.”

“It’s none of your business now, is it?” she hisses at him. “You don’t even have a plan outside killing All Might and I’m still of the mind that it’s fucking stupid and doesn’t aim for anything long-term. More like child lashing out.”

Shigaraki’s lips curls.

“Mind your words, I can still finish the work.”

“Like I’d let you,” Katsuki says sourly even as her skin aches and itches and blood is spilling down to soak into her dark jeans. “I’m fucking done with dying.”

《*Stay there you idiot*》 she snaps to Shinsou as she spies him drawing up to his feet and he snorts, wobbling a bit before steadying.

《*Not letting you out of my sight*》 he informs her.

Katsuki gives him a flat exasperated look.

“Self-preservation of a fucking lemming,” she mutters, opening up the sweat glands in her hands and flexing them. “We’re getting Dabi and then you’re getting him the fuck out of here,” she informs Shigaraki. “And Himiko.” She slants a look at her yellow eyes friend who appeared to be having far too fucking fun with Hawks.

But... safe.

Something nags at her as she peers at the Number Three Hero because he didn’t appear to be really *trying* and she narrows her eyes as he looks to her with a sharp sort of interest that makes her mouth curl to bare her teeth.

Shinsou halts up beside them, ignoring Shigaraki completely in favour of throwing an arm around her shoulder and she tenses as he pulls her down.

“We are going to have a long overdue talk with Ashido after this,” he breathes into her ear and Shinsou smells of sweat and blood and something she can’t really place as she stands a bit stiffly until he releases her, two finger curling into a loop of her jeans.

Which, fine then.

“I suppose All Might and All For One are still fighting?” this she directs to Shigaraki, not sure how to place the complicated tangle of feelings inside her chest at the thought of Mina.

“It’s broadcasted over the world.” Shigaraki’s eyes shine with liquid triumph. “All Might will fall today, one way or the other. He’s already weakening, faltering. It’s only a matter of time.”

Katsuki is even less sure what to make of her feelings relating to *that* and shoves it down.

"Right," she says, her brain fuzzy and still leaking blood in a way that was decidedly not good.

She turns her full attention to the familiar roar of blue flames.

Still alive. Still fine.

You better fucking stay that way, Dabi.

Chapter End Notes

What do ya know, a near dying to reset the trauma of another near dying. Katsuki is having such a fun time, really.

She's far from fine, but alive, and Shigaraki has returned to pick up what is his. The League fought to keep Bakugou in canon and they'll fight to keep her here.

And they're not about to leave Dabi and Toga behind.

I am still not up to date with your comments but I have a big test coming up Friday and I'm just going to have to focus on that. Scrambled this together between stuff and I have work in 8 hours so it's busy busy busy time for me.

But I love you guys so know that. I will get back to every single one of you.

I hang about tumblr as artsy-death and this has been chapter 34 of In The End.

I hope you enjoyed!

Harsh Reality

Chapter Notes

See Through = Hagakure

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Katsuki reaches out and clenches down on the back of Dabi's collar, dragging him into an awkward bend beneath a flare of hot fire as she crouches to avoid it herself, feeling the searing heat lick over her as Dabi twists and forces her down further as her boots leave the ground and air flees her with a startled wheeze as he bare back hits the ground.

Ice flares out to block them, Half-n-Half's voice calling out to Endeavour, and Katsuki's never heard her classmate so *furious* even if the exact words are distractedly swept away in the very presence of Dabi so very close to her.

"What happened to you?" he demands, his eyes dark, ash and smoke and the scent of burnt flesh crawling up her nose.

"Your Leader is an asshole," she grits out. "He must have picked that up from *you*."

Dabi huffs a low sound, pressing his forehead against hers, and Katsuki blinks as he breathes out in a rough exhale of air that brings with the familiar sulphur she's come to associate with him.

"I'm going to kill him," he tells her, his voice so quiet that she can barely make out the words. "But I suppose I can spare you a moment to make sure you don't bleed out." He levels up, his hand flattening across the ruined expanse of her flesh, his turquoise eyes gleaming. "Can't allow anyone else to mark-up that pretty skin of yours."

Katsuki's chest twists with something that is simultaneously terribly fond and terribly exasperated.

And then there's blue flames and familiar searing heat and she sucks in a breath as her skin bubbles and burns as he moves it over her chest and –

Shigaraki had really fucked her up, Katsuki registers through the heat and pain, the missing skin stretching from the hem of her jeans and up

to her shoulders in a loss of skin that should reasonably have her blacked out long ago, her fingers curling to dig into Dabi's shoulder as it his flames slowly eases and dies off.

Katsuki sucks in a deep breath, panting as her heart beats too fast and too hard, and Dabi studies her expression for a moment before easing off her and their hands clasps before he pulls her up to her feet where her legs nearly folds before she finds the muscles needed to keep her upright.

"*Fuck*," Katsuki hisses out with a tremble because it fucking *hurts* and it's only sheer will that keeps her from slumping down against the nearest wall and just blacking the fuck *out*.

"You're starting to look more and more like me," Dabi observes as he considers her critically. "I know you find me hot but I've never claimed to be a fashion statement to aim towards."

"Oh *fuck off*," Katsuki wheezes. "You're not looking too good either."

The burns on Dabi's arm are seared anew and the stink of burnt flesh reeks off him, ash in his hair and streaked across his face, his hair singed and the holes around the clamps in his cheeks are charred raw from the sheer heat of the metal.

"Bakugou!"

Her head snaps up, Dabi is faster, and Katsuki's back hits a wall with pain than her brain has no interest in comprehending.

She might have made a sound.

Her body really isn't doing too well but at least she's not dripping blood anymore and Katsuki counts her blessings when she can because this world is a loop of one fucked-up thing after another and she shoves it down down *down* to be dealt with another time as she glares into the raging inferno.

Endeavour.

It shouldn't surprise her to see eyes like Dabi's, like the left one of Half-n-Half's. Genetics and bullshit.

Dabi's makes her want to press close, Endeavour's brings another sort of want entirely and she feels her palms get slick in response to her own violent cravings and the sheer clamouring heat that already has

her fringe sticking slick to her forehead.

“If you two are quite done *flirting*,” Half-n-Half’s voice reaches her just a tad strained and she flicks her gaze to him.

Takes in the burnt clothes and much shorter hair and the complicated mix of feelings in mismatched eyes as she meets them across the alley where he’d planted himself in front of them both.

“You shouldn’t have involved yourself in the first place,” Dabi drawls before his flames explodes out and the noise rings loud enough that Katsuki jerks, hissing through her teeth as her head pounds.

She’s never seen Dabi’s flames like this, palms snapping forward in shock waves of large intensive burst of blue flames that has Half-n-Half stumbling back, half of his body smoking, the other struggling to stay cold as he blew out a breath of icy mist.

“He has no idea, has he?” Katsuki asks in an undertone, studying the dark eyes of the Number Two Hero as he defended himself with his own roaring mix of red and yellow that rose in a protective shield as a single foot shifted back to compensate for the force of Dabi’s attacks.

“When did you figure it out?” Half-n-Half asks, his eyes unfathomable as he looks at her.

“Didn’t know for sure until earlier this week,” Katsuki coughs wetly, spitting out blood with a grimace. “You have the same pair of eyes but it doesn’t have to mean shit and I didn’t really fucking care either.”

“You shouldn’t be here.” Half-n-Half turns back to the fighting.

“If you’re trying some bullshit excuse of this being *family business*—“

“Your chest is more burns than skin,” Half-n-Half says flatly. “And not too long ago you hardly knew your name.”

Katsuki opens her mouth.

Closes it.

“Fair,” she agrees with a grunt. “But I’m not leaving that idiot to figure things out like this.”

“He won’t hesitate to kill you if he decides you’re teaming up with a Villain,” Half-n-Half warns mildly. “He’s the Number Two Hero and that means something. He can’t afford to do anything, publically, to

me, but you're not an investment and thus dispensable."

"I'm so tired of this world making excuses for Heroes because of their fucking *ranking*."

Half-n-Half makes a soft noise and it takes her a second to recognise it as *laughter*, his shoulders shaking quietly. "I can see why he likes you," is what he tells her as she slants him a suspicious look. "Dabi never harboured any warm feelings for the Hero rankings."

Katsuki grunts, considering the situation through narrowed eyes.

"I'm not losing my brother a second time, Bakugou," Half-n-Half tells her. "What's the plan?"

"Hell if I know," Katsuki grumps. "Shigaraki said ten minutes and then that fog freak Kurogiri is picking them all up. It's been four. But Dabi's an idiot and he's stubborn – he won't take kindly to interference."

"I might not like Endeavour but if he kills him he'll erase any chance of living a normal life."

Katsuki grimaces. "I know," she says in an undertone as Dabi's flames *curves*, his skin hissing and bubbling in response to his own volatile flames.

She can feel Shigaraki's eyes digging into the back of her neck and it feels like a *challenge*, almost. Shinsou watchful and slumped against the wall near him.

A choice.

She can wait it out, hope Dabi makes it another six minutes, kick him to Shigaraki and be done with it.

Or she can involve herself, *make sure* Dabi makes it another six minutes, kick him to Shigaraki and deal with a very angry and very volatile Number Two Hero in the aftermath of it.

It's not really a choice, Katsuki has known where she stands since she allowed Dabi far closer to her heart than she reasonably should.

Just a little bit longer, Katsuki encourages her broken and exhausted body as she kicks her boots off and flexes her toes, the emptiness in her chest pounding ugly and consuming, her head thrumming with old memories that ghost too raw for her to want to deal with, everything

tangling up and threatening to drag her under.

Just-

-

Katsuki drops through the air, kicking her bare foot up and exploding down just as Endeavour's eyes dart up and she gives him a vicious smile as she slams into him, his eyes flaring wide as her palm smeared wet with nitroglycerin over his face.

"I don't like abusers," she hisses at him as he grasps for her, yanking her down, but she loops her legs in a cross behind his neck and drops her ruined upper body down so fast that her vision turns white even as she smears more nitroglycerin down his body, swiping at his crotch just as his hand curled around her bicep.

The bone breaks, snapping clean, and Katsuki's already stressed mind makes a funny sort of static noise with a wheeze bubbles wet from her mouth.

Her body goes loose limbed as it collapses on itself and then there's a knee slamming into her nose, and it breaks too, and Katsuki gurgles a wet gasp before he *throws her* with a strength that isn't anywhere near All Might's but terrifying all the same.

She wonders what it might have been like, to be a child, measuring against that sort of power, her ruined body rolling across the ground, something in her chest snapping and the skin on her back and side scraping raw.

She spares him no sympathies as his voice careens over her fuzzy mind as she dredges a bloody sort of smile at him as she finds him through the mess of her vision.

"I- sweat nitroglycerin," she informs him with a wet dribble of blood and saliva as the world crawls fussily.

Katsuki is having the worst sort of day.

It does get just a smidge better by the comprehension that dawns into Endeavour's eyes before blue eats up her vision and an explosion rings out the backlash slides her back, a large rock hitting her shoulder with a snap and there's white and Katsuki is just really fucking *exhausted*.

The smoke blows away to reveal Endeavour slumped against the ruins

of a building, skin charred and ruined, face smoking.

Half-n-Half yanks at Dabi's sleeve, meeting his brother's eyes without fear.

Katsuki can't really hear what they're saying. She's not really hearing anything past the ringing in her ears and her body is-

It's kinda trembling, badly, and reality is catching up to her in all the worst ways.

Dabi takes a step back, turning towards her, but there's a hand on her shoulder and Dabi pauses, a strange look stealing over his face where he stands.

"A bit late to the party, aren't we, Aizawa-san?" Dabi drawls but there's something troubled and dark in his eyes as he glances sideways to Endeavour, fingers curling, before he looks down at her.

Katsuki isn't quite sure what kind of picture she makes but it's likely nothing pretty.

"Go." Katsuki jerks in surprise at the sound of Aizawa's voice, turning her head weakly to glance up at him. Sees the flat line of his mouth, the exhaustion lined in his face, the grim look in his eyes as he meets Dabi's gaze. "She'll be safe with me."

"I'll be fine." Katsuki's breath bubbles out wet and bloody and she blinks against the hazy dipping of the world. "Himiko – she *needs* you."

His turquoise eyes snaps down towards her and she lifts her hand weakly, folding her middle and ring finger down, the corner of her mouth lifting weakly.

His brow furrows and he hesitates for a long moment before taking a single step back, and then another, dark fog opening up behind him as Toga collides with him, bloody and vicious but alive with a handful of red feathers in her grasp, yellow eyes snapping towards her as Dabi's arm loops around her chest.

"You better take care of her, *Hero*," Dabi says heavily.

"Kasu-" Himiko's voice cuts off, startled, fingers stretching out through the fog as Dabi shoves her through with one last dark look at them both.

"I know what that sign means," Aizawa murmurs as he carefully shifts her until she's sprawled out on her back and it helps easing some of the strain of her breathing as she stares up at the dark starry sky and the spiralling smokes of ruin curling up towards it.

"Just a hand spasm," Katsuki wheezes out, quite unable to stop the trembling that creeps through her body even as she clenches her teeth shut together.

"You're going into shock," Aizawa informs her as her eyes flutters open, cold spreading through her limbs and breathing picking up into short static bursts. "I'd offer you my shirt but the fabric is going to stick to your wounds and you won't find that a very fun experience."

Katsuki paws weakly for him and his hand finds hers, curling warm and steady and unafraid of her power.

It had taken her years to find the same sort of acceptance of it. Or maybe resignation. Of what she'd become and what it meant to live out a life in this body that slowly came to be hers.

She jerks a bit in surprise as another hand finds her left, her fingers twitching weakly, and she sees Shinsou's purple eyes in the mess of it all.

She must have lost time. Everything is fading in and out and she's pushed herself far past any reasonable limits.

A silvery blanket gets settled over her and there's voice and talking and red wings and peculiar hawkish eyes peering down at her through it all as the Number Three Hero considers her with a look she doesn't quite understand.

Everything settles into a mumble of hazy incomprehension and somewhere in the midst of it all Katsuki's brain simply stops trying to make sense of the world.

-

Katsuki stares muzzily up at the hospital ceiling, a dull sort of resignation buried beneath heavy meds as her lungs expands and folds against her will through the tube shoved down her throat.

Back again... huh?

She's not the person she was, her secrets are out, but she feels just as

lost as she'd been those eight years ago when she found herself in the body of a small boy after dying.

"You died, twice," Aizawa's voice makes her head tilt, finding black against white, his long hair pulled back and hands folded together. "Your chest is just a large burn scar but your classmates told me what happened and it's likely that he saved your life. You'd already lost too much blood and even with Hawks carrying you it took time to get you to the medical team we had standing by."

Her chest rises and falls, unwillingly.

She wonders if it's a cruelty, really, considering the reality that awaits her.

"Jirou kept me updated on the situation after Hagakure leant me her ear piece. She wasn't very happy with you. I think you'll find that there's a handful of your classmates who are quite eager to have a word with you."

She's tired.

And yet she keeps looking at him.

"I wish you would have spoken to me sooner," Aizawa tells her with a sigh as he leans back on a chair that looked far from comfortable. "I still don't have the full picture but I imagine... it can't have been easy."

She stills.

Aizawa breathes out.

"You're not alone, Bakugou," he tells her, eyes dark but not unkind. "No matter what happens during the following days I've already spoken to Mic and Midnight and you have a bed at our place if... it's needed."

Katsuki's eyes doesn't burn.

They *don't*.

"You must have been terrified," Aizawa says softly as something wet drips down her cheek, soaking into the bandage on her cheek as she squeezes her eyes shut. "I'm sorry."

Mitsuki and Masaru hasn't been to see her.

Katsuki tries not to imagine the worst but it's hard to when she's long since stopped expecting kindness from the world.

She's wrapped up in bandages, aching and uncomfortable where she sits slumped down in the small interrogation room in the pink cat-eared hoodie and black sweatpants Aizawa had lent to her.

There's a small table in front of her, a chair across it, a large black two-way mirror.

Her skin itches where burns had begun to heal and she feels lethargic and distant from the ongoing around her, her wrists are secured by handcuffs to a loop of metal in the table.

She supposes she should be thankful they hadn't done worse.

Aizawa steps into the room, closely followed by a non-descript man in black slacks, white button-up, and short dark hair.

He introduces himself as Detective Tsukauchi, taking the seat across her as Aizawa leans back against the wall opposite the two-way mirror. Perfectly in place to prevent the use of her quirk, not that she had any thought of using it, and she wonders if it's a kindness, really.

She can't really decide.

Everything just feels messy and hazy and her mind keeps looping back to Dabi and Mina and Mitsuki and Masaru and-

Katsuki feels-

She doesn't know what she feels.

A bit lost. Disconnected.

"Bakugou Katsuki – that is the name of the body you're in," Tsukauchi begins and she lifts her eyes towards him, giving him a heavy look. "But I'm to understand that's not the full truth of who you are."

"How blunt of you," Katsuki says flatly.

"My quirk allows me to tell when someone is lying to me," Tsukauchi informs her mildly and only the seriousness of the situation prevents her from slotting him as something ridiculous.

She doesn't really feel like it, doesn't really feel like doing anything at all.

Katsuki wouldn't just rather go to bed and not bother, she knows how this is going to end.

Had known for a long time.

"What was your name before all of this?" Tsukauchi presses as she stares dully at him.

"Katsuki is my name," she grumbles finally, tiredly, rolling her neck with a crack and a slight wince. "I might have been her, I might even have been the boy, but I'm just... Katsuki now." She grimaces. "But you're going to press it anyway." She tilts her head up to stare at the ceiling. "Amélie" she answers finally. "Caron Amélie, if we're going by Japanese naming conventions."

It's a name she hasn't thought about in... years.

She's not even sure she's pronouncing it correctly, had never had a need to.

There's another name that had been more hers than anything but she doesn't owe it to anyone.

"French?"

She hums noncommittally, bending her shoulder to scratch an itch beneath her chin.

"How old are you?"

"I was twenty-two when I died." She dips her head down to study his reaction but he doesn't give much of one. "Thirty now, depending on how you look at it."

"According to your classmates--"

"I grew up in a world without quirks," Katsuki interrupts tiredly. "We didn't have any sort of powers, at least none that I'm aware of. I was killed and then I woke up in the body of a boy who'd quite conveniently died and instead of fessing up I kept quiet. That's the gist of what you want to hear, right?"

Tsukauchi coughs, shuffling the papers in front of him and then simply smoothed his hand over them and raised his head to give her a

steady look.

“Why didn’t you?” he asks her. “Tell anyone,” he clarifies when her brow creases.

Katsuki huffs a laugh. “Do you have any idea of how terrifying this world is?” she asks him and he raises a brow. “You treat violence as entertainment, powers that reasonable should have placed me in a fucking four-square room as *normal*, something to be *celebrated*. I was terrified out of my fucking *mind*. Couldn’t make sense of anything, least of all my existence, and you think I should have *told someone*?” She bares her teeth. “The person who killed me was my best friend, a person I trusted wholly, and he twisted a knife in my gut. I wasn’t really in a right mind to do *trust*.”

“I see.” Tsukauchi draws a hand down his chin, looking contemplative of all things.

Katsuki doesn’t even try to hazard a guess what he might be thinking about it all.

“When did you first make contact with the Villain known as Dabi?”

Katsuki slants him an unimpressed look. “He wasn’t a Villain four years ago,” she says with a flash of her teeth. “He oversaw me getting into an altercation with some kids who picked a fight and he decided I was interesting, I suppose.” She shrugs. “We kept contact during the years. He’s always... We’re both a bit fucked-up. There’s comfort in that,” she says a bit awkwardly because there’s something profoundly strange about trying to rationalize what they are to someone else.

Someone who couldn’t possibly begin to understand.

“And the scars?”

She rolls her neck, gives him a flat look.

He gives her a patient one back.

“He helped,” she says shortly, just a tad defensively.

“What about Toga?” he asks instead of pressing the issue.

“Dunno.” Katsuki’s brow creases. “Dabi picked her up somewhere, hell if I know where. Never bothered to ask.”

“Shigaraki expressed an interest in you in particular, do you know

why?"

Katsuki's fingers twitches and she scowls. "What am I, a mind-reader?" she grumbles. "He claimed he'd been interested in me for a while. Suppose the Sports Festival aggravated the issue and he decided that I would make a good middle-finger to All Might and the rest of the Hero Society." She blows out a harsh breath. "Dabi did try to warn me before the Sports Festival but hell if I know why he fixated on me."

It was actually kind of strange. Had she met him before that? Katsuki doesn't know. Most people just came and went like ghostly impressions that didn't stick before U.A. Her world had been Masaru and Mitsuki and Dabi and Toga.

Easy. Complicated. *Messy*.

"Why the Sports Festival in particular?" Tsukauchi asks, so damn *calm* that Katsuki kinda wants to kick him.

She gives him a dull look. "You mean other than the fact that All Might decided to chain up one of the prospective Heroes-to-be in front of all her future colleagues and make a mockery out of her? Anyone would have been angry, he was looking to use it."

Tsukauchi pauses, just for a second, a strange look flittering through his gaze before he clears his throat.

"I see," he says.

"You see," Katsuki echoes flatly. "How *wonderful*."

"All For One, he was interested in you."

Katsuki jerks a bit, fingers itching to curl over the aching emptiness inside of her.

Her lips pulls back and she gives herself a shake. "Yeah," she says shortly. "I told-" She grits her teeth. "I told Dabi about - the whole issue of what I was, at the League of Villains. Should have figured they'd be keeping bugs. He was *interested* in what made me get stuck here in the first place and then he-" She closes her eyes, drawing a breath. "He *said* the power was there, not quite a quirk but he wanted it for himself so he tried to take it. Couldn't so he just... destroyed it, I think."

It reminds her uncomfortably of James who had chosen to kill her when he couldn't keep her for himself.

Tsukauchi had gone very very still but he slowly relaxed at the last admittance. "You are sure?"

She raises her shoulders in a shrug. "That's what he *claimed*. Like I said, we didn't have *quirks*. It's not impossible he lied to me but he did *something*." She shifts uncomfortably. "It's all... wrong, inside of me," she admits shortly. "So he did *something* but ya know, people *lie* so maybe ask him."

Tsukauchi taps his fingers against the table and then sighs.

"You have to understand that this case is unprecedented." Katsuki gives him a flat *no, duh*, look. "I've also been informed there's been some... internal issues that might have further compromised you before the kidnapping but there is a lot of things that needs to be discussed, you understand?"

Like my living situation? Katsuki thinks cynically but does not voice, grunting noncommittally.

"There's also the issue with your relationship with Dabi." Katsuki gives him a wary look. "From, ah, *evidence*-" A curl of amusement unfurls deep in her gut at the clear uncomfortable look on his face "-we gathered that it might have turned physical and considering your *age*-"

"Which is thirty." Katsuki leans forward, allowing her mouth to curl. "I'm either sixteen or thirty, you can't have it both ways and Dabi was well-informed and quite patient through the entire thing with my expressed consent so whatever you're trying to pin him down with *that* is one thing I won't allow."

Tsukauchi gives her a searching look. "You understand why others might not agree with you?"

"By that reasoning you would have been more comfortable if I were to fuck one of my classmates," Katsuki deadpans. "And considering I'm twice their age that's all sorts of fucked-up."

"... I see your point," Tsukauchi admits after a short moment and Aizawa makes a low sound of amusement.

"I'm well aware of what I am, Detective. I'm stuck in this body, aren't

I?” She turns her palms up, shrugging self-deprecatingly. “I was a twenty-two-year-old deaf woman and then I was... this. And it’s fucked up, don’t think I don’t know that, but I didn’t kill the boy, he died falling from that bridge and the woman didn’t go about her day expecting to be murdered.” She grimaces. “I’m not them, I have their memories both but I’m just... Katsuki.”

Fucked-up twenty-ways to Sunday and somehow still alive.

“Why did you decide to become a Hero?”

Katsuki blinks and then she turns to look at Aizawa who is patiently leaning against the wall and she supposes he must have picked up most of the information already through the ear piece he’d gotten from See Through because he looks as unruffled as ever.

She hesitates but-

What did it even matter now?

“I have the boy’s memories,” she tells him. “He... *loved* All Might. He wanted – so *much*. I suppose I felt guilty.” She turns her gaze to the table in front of her. “I didn’t want to die, I didn’t want to wake up *here* but I did because we both had shitty luck. I felt like I owed him at least a *chance*.”

Chapter End Notes

Cobbled this together during short breaks while studying for my exam. There's a lot to deal with, things to thread together, the aftermath and consequences of decisions made, secrets kept and just.

It's a shitty situation, all around, and Katsuki is dealing with a lot.

Nothing is simple, least of all the reality of what she is and how it's impacted the people around her.

Going to keep this short because I need to get back to studying but I love you guys, your comments mean the world and I'm looking forward to having this exam over so I can get back to writing properly again.

I hang about tumblr as artsy-death if you want to come say hi there and this has been chapter 35 of In The End.

I hope you enjoyed!

Remake

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Katsuki spends a lot of time sleeping to pass the time.

There's no one else in the hospital room she finds herself in, save for the occasional nurse who has to enter a code to step inside. Katsuki listens to the beep-beep-beep of the buttons, the confirming noise, and the heavy click that follows, and spares the time to open her eyes and suffer through her wounds being checked and eat the food without really tasting it.

She knows she's essentially locked-up under the goodwill of the police who are far too busy dealing with the aftermath of All Might's defeat of All For One and consequent reveal of his dwindling powers.

They don't have the time for her.

Katsuki *understands* but it doesn't make it less fucking depressing.

What's the point? She wonders more than once. She'd attacked the Number Two Hero. Had done exactly what she'd vehemently insisted was nothing but *idiotic* and she's honestly surprised they hadn't stuck her behind bars already.

The waiting makes her restless.

She just wants it all over with.

-

Katsuki wipes the fog away from the mirror, gives herself a critical look in the mirror as she drags a hand through the wet spikes of her hair.

Shigaraki had really done a number on her body. There's something truly fucked-up about her fucking *nipples* having, apparently, been turned to ash and dust.

She drags her palm over the strange flatness – feels the stretch of gnarly purple scars courtesy of Dabi and the aid of whatever quirk had been used on her to speed things up. It says something about the way

she functions that it lessens some of her dysphoria. Scars is easier to handle than skin. Less jarring, more soothing.

She knows that waking up with Shigaraki's scar would have been *wrong*. Dabi understands that about her and he spares the time to pull her back together even with Endeavour at the other side of the alley.

There's puncture marks in her arm where Himiko had bit down, a twist of pink skin where the knife had gone deep, and Katsuki presses her palm against it, closing her eyes where she stands naked with water dripping down her body in the hospital bathroom.

She'd once stared into the mirror to see a stranger, a boy of eight, so different from what she'd been. But she'd claimed this body as her own, one painstaking scar after another, had even learnt to find her own pleasure in it as she sunk into Dabi's body and allowed him to claim hers in turn.

Her nails sink into the skin.

Mitsuki and Masaru still hasn't been to see her.

She can't get herself to ask.

What must they think of me? Katsuki wonders.

While she'd claimed this body for herself they'd, unknowingly, been caring for a stranger masquerading as their son for *eight years*.

It's all of her own making, the consequences of her decisions and fears. She has no right to the anger, the disappointment, the deep jagged hurt that crowds alongside the yawning pit of emptiness that feels ever overwhelming inside of her chest.

But it's there anyway.

-

Everything was easier when she didn't *care*.

That's on her, Katsuki knows.

-

Katsuki twitches, eyes opening and head turning to look to the door.

She expects another nurse.

Stills and then slowly draws herself up, resting her chin on her knees as she stares at Endeavour as he steps into the room. Stiff, but not wrapped up in bandages – better than he'd been the last time she saw him sprawled out on the ground courtesy of her own suicidal drive.

There's a scar going down his face, vicious and deep where her palm had dragged over his forehead and eye, all the way down to his chin.

He's out of his Hero get-up, fancy slacks and a simple black t-shirt that stretches out over his muscled form.

Wariness rises through her along with a something jagged and dangerous that twists her mouth as she presses it against her arms to hide it.

"You look better," she gets out as he considers her without a flaming beard or mark of station.

It strikes her as decidedly odd that he's chosen to come to her like *this*.

"Bakugou Katsuki." Endeavour tastes the name. "Caron Amélie."

She tilts her head, just a fraction. "*Todoroki Enji*," she curls her tongue around the name. "Greetings out of the way, how pleasant."

"I was informed that you insist on calling yourself by a name belonging to a dead boy." Endeavour steps further into the room and Katsuki becomes very, very aware of the fact that she has absolutely no way of getting out of the room.

Recognises, a bit distantly, that it should concern her more than it does as he claims the chair beside her bed.

"The woman is dead, too," she says mildly. "Perhaps I should just pick a new one. I've always been fond of the name *Touya*." Endeavour doesn't react outwardly, save for a narrowing of his eyes, but she feels the heat of the room pick up, prickling against her skin. "I've always been more of an apple over a peaches kind of person but I feel like it'd grow on me, ya know?"

"I didn't come here for games, *girl*."

"I'm not one of your children, *old man*." Katsuki's mouth stretches razor sharp. "And I really don't give a *shit* about your Hero ranking so if you think your intimidation will get you anywhere then *think again*."

Endeavour's heavy knuckles fold tight with barely restrained violence and something deep in her soul curls like a satisfied cat in response to the anger.

And then it drains out of him, slowly, clever eyes resting sharp on her, studying her, picking her apart in a way that makes her skin prickle and itch.

"Whatever you think you know is wrong," Endeavour says, voice heavy and gruff, and Katsuki's mouth curls. "Touya's death was an accident of his own making. I've only ever wanted the best for my family."

"You keep fucking telling yourself that," Katsuki growls quietly, ire at being denied the violence she craves making her fingers curl. "That's what people like you say. But it's never been about your family, it's only ever been about *you*. That's why Todoroki Touya is a buried and forgotten least he shames his father's name. That's why Todoroki Rei is a numbered hospital room with limited visitation." She unfurls, palms pressing down against the bed as she leant forward to meet his gaze. "Your son knows pain, he knows how to deal with pain, how to *function* despite it. Don't think for a moment I don't know what that *means*."

"Shouto is strong," Endeavour says sharply. "One day he'll surpass me because gave him the tools to do so."

"He'll surpass you *despite* you." Katsuki eases back reluctantly, dropping back on her rump with a snort. "Genetics don't mean shit in the long run. I don't get your fucking obsession with Hero rankings but if Shouto ever claims the number one spot it won't be because you *bred a good Hero*. It'll be because he's a decent fucking person."

"Shouto was quite vehement in defending you." Katsuki jerks a bit at the sudden change of topic. "At least he didn't pick someone without *spine*."

Endeavour leans back, a harsh contrasting figure against the whiteness of her hospital room.

"I don't know what he's told you but he's a child yet and too young to understand that sometimes sacrifices has to be made for it to matter in the long run. All Might has made the younger generation *idealistic*. They treat it like a fanciful dream." Endeavour's mouth curls. "They don't understand the harsh reality of what it means to be a Hero. It's become a media playground."

His gaze flickers knowingly and he's never looked more like Dabi's father.

"You understand, I see that in your eyes. It's never been about ranking to me, it's only ever been about becoming the *strongest*. What the world makes of it I have no interest in. Shouto will understand given time, and until then I can pave the road for him and give him all that he needs to succeed."

"Why are you *here*?" Katsuki demands, ill-ease threading through her.

"Why indeed." Endeavour's hand touches against the scar on his face. "I considered offering you a spot in my Agency during the interning but ultimately decided against it. I find myself curious what would have gone down between us had I chosen differently. You're ruthless, clever, I've read your files."

"What are you getting at?" she asks warily.

"The only thing standing between you and a continued path on becoming a Hero is *me*."

Endeavour's smile isn't kind.

"I am here to make you an offer."

-

Katsuki finds herself escorted by a cat-headed police officer whose name she forgets between one breath and the other.

They're here.

Her hearts pounds too loud, too violent inside her chest.

They're-

The door to a small room opens up, revealing two couches opposite each other, a table between them, a man and a woman seated close, eyes upon her as she stills in the door opening.

The police officer says something but it filters away like a buzz with the click of the door that makes her flinch, taking one step forward and then another, the handcuffs on her wrists rattling as her legs folds and she sinks down on the couch opposite them.

"Amélie" Mitsuki greets her and-

The word *kaa-san* dies on her lips before it can be spoken.

“Mitsuki-san,” she says instead with resignation and exhaustion alike.

His parents.

Not hers. Not hers. *Not hers.*

It’s so easy to forget the more she settled into this body and life but it’s remained the truth all the same.

-

“It... might be better if you don’t come home for a while.”

“We need-“

-

Katsuki curls on herself, arms over her head.

Counts her breaths, the reminder that she’s still alive as she worms a hand beneath her hoodie and presses her palm against the stretch of gnarly scars.

-

”They told me you’ve denied any sort of visitation.”

Katsuki doesn’t look at Aizawa where he sits on the chair beside her bed. She keeps her back to him, her breath jagged, feeling too small, too big, too young, too old. It crowds up inside of her until she doesn’t know what to do with herself.

She just wants it all to *stop*.

“Ashido has been quite upset about it,” Aizawa tells her mildly. “I understand that your meeting with Mitsuki-san and-“

“Go away.”

“No,” Aizawa denies her and Katsuki curls tighter on herself. “You can’t stay here forever. You’re all healed up and Endeavour chose to drop the charges of assault. There is nothing keeping you here and you cannot hide away forever. There is still-“

“Go. Away.”

"You need a place to stay." Aizawa ignores her. "We still have room—"

"I'm not going with you," Katsuki bites out, jagged and raw and made up of ugly pieces. "You don't need to concern yourself with me. I'm not one of your *students* anymore."

"I heard," Aizawa says finally. "But it doesn't mean I don't care, Bakugou. Everything is changing, you're hurt and you haven't been given time to process any of it." A rustle and a hand reaching out to curl gently around her shoulder which ripples tight with tension. "You don't need to do this on your own."

Katsuki remains stiff, skin prickling and itching.

"You're not doing yourself or your friends any favours by ignoring them," Aizawa tells her.

"Maybe they're better off without me," Katsuki bites out. "Maybe the entire fucking *world* is just better off without me."

"You don't mean that."

Katsuki clenches her teeth.

"Bakugou—"

"They called me *Amélie*, you know." Something curls dangerously inside of her, claws against her soul, and a laugh escapes her, rough and wet as she chokes on it. "What right do I even have to that name, huh?" she demands of him, twisting around, fingers curling into the sheets as she meets his eyes. "What do I really have in this world, Aizawa? Please tell me because I don't *fucking know* anymore."

"You have more than you think," Aizawa says and hatred rises sharp through her, bitter and old and ugly as her lips pulls back.

"I didn't ask for any of this!" Katsuki snarls at him, voice breaking. "I didn't ask to *die* and I didn't ask to *come back*!"

"I know," Aizawa's eyes are dark through her blurry gaze, chest rising and falling with her harsh breaths. "I *know*," he repeats as she trembles.

Aizawa's hand presses gently against the side of her face, the bed dipping under his weight as he sinks down beside her and Katsuki finds herself guided to press up against his shoulder and her hand

curls into the fabric of his dark shirt.

“I never meant hurt them.” Katsuki digs her nails into his skin.

“They need time.” Aizawa’s hand brushes soft over her hair. “It’s a lot to come to terms with. To mourn.”

-

Decisions, consequences – Katsuki understands even when she hates it.

It’s why she can’t get herself to make excuses when his parents stare at her from across the couch, having learnt that the son they had loved had been dead all this time. That she is parts of him and yet not, that she had the memories of another person entirely.

She isn’t a child. She’s thirty, only eight years younger than them both, and perhaps that only makes it uglier.

They had seen her at her worst, in the aftermath of her murder, at the fear that pounded through her as she struggled to come to terms with the world she’d woken up in, the body she is in. But it had been a one-sided thing because they hadn’t known and she had and she hadn’t said a word about it.

Bakugou Katsuki, to them, is *dead*.

Amélie Caron is *dead*.

That’s always been her reality – she’s known it for years.

Katsuki stares down at her clenched hands and then slowly allows them to unfurl.

-

“Hey, Tsukauchi-san.” They’re wrapping up the last interview together, Katsuki’s brows creased with contemplation.

The detective pauses with his hand on top of his hat, head tilting just a fraction.

“Can I ask you for a favour?”

-

桃矢勝己

She traces the kanji carefully onto the paper before she pushes it over for the detective to witness and sign.

-

Her release feels too easy but she knows it's all thanks to Endeavour – that it *means something* to be the, now, Number One Hero with All Might's consequent fall from grace.

Still alive but Katsuki has seen the pictures of him, weak, shrunken, *not dangerous*.

She thinks she understands the curl of Endeavour's lips, his displeasure at claiming a spot he hadn't *won*. Hadn't she fought for the same thing during the Sports Festival? The bitter curl of an unfair win that didn't feel much like a win at all.

He isn't the *strongest*.

All Might's body just hadn't held out – the gap would always be there and Endeavour claims a title that doesn't, rightly, belong to him.

She finds both pleasure in his clear *anger* over it and a twisted sort of empathy that she doesn't particularly like or want to acknowledge.

She slides the card from her pocket, staring down at it as she lingers in the middle of the shopping mall her feet had steered her towards. Endeavour hadn't put a limit to it and she doesn't particularly understand it but she's tired of second guessing everything and it's not like she has anywhere else to turn.

She needs clothes. Essentials. No one had bothered to as much as pick up her boots and she's in a pair of too big ones courtesy of one of the nurses who'd taken pity on her and brought a pair of her father's old shoes.

Her hair is singed at the edges and she hesitates but ultimately steers her steps towards the closest hairdressing saloon.

-

She ends up with an undercut, shorter at the back and tapering towards a messy fringe, the hair at her neck shaved down to a short buzz. Let's the woman in charge of the store stab her ear with a bar piercing after staring at the black sign near the mirror for a good forty minutes.

It's far from drastic but she likes the feel of the metal beneath her fingers as she reaches up to press against it.

She finds a pair of bright orange sneakers and snatches them up along with a pair of proper boots from a store aimed towards Hero regalia. It's easy enough to find jeans, socks and underwear and she buys herself knitted sweaters with patterns that better belonged on an 80's arcade carpet and which slumps loose on her shoulder as she wrestles into one of them in a tiny bathroom stall.

She probably looks ridiculous. Katsuki doesn't particularly care and she finds a green backpack to shove most of it down into before shouldering her way towards the closest music store.

"I need noise cancelling headphones," she tells the worker gruffly as the woman turns to her with a bright polite smile that looked rather painful. "The most expensive pair you have," she tacks on because she fucking *can*.

She ends up buying the second most expensive pair, eyeing the little remote on the side of it which could be adjusted to filter sound on varying levels. They're bright orange and settles comfortably over her ears after she crams the packaging down into the first garbage bin she finds.

She turns it on maximum and nearly misses a step as all sound cut off around her, eyes widening as she froze, taking in a silence which had seemed like a distant dream to claim once again for herself.

She's aware of way mouth shapes around her, the buzz of the crowd that *should be* but *isn't*.

A disbelieving noise escapes her but she doesn't hear it, palm pressing against the side of the headphones as she closes her eyes and allows herself to relish in it.

-

Katsuki buys an ice cream at the end of it and slumps down on an empty table as she drags her two new phones up and plugs them into the small station beside her. Both screens flashes into a little half-green signs to let her know that they'd been clever enough to have them half-way charged before selling and she turns them on.

One is a cheap old thing paid in cash, the other brand new and expensive and paid with the card.

It's probably stupid, going along with Endeavour's whims, but she is very aware of the fact that she doesn't, actually, have a choice if she wants to keep living in this society. She'd attacked the, now, Number One Hero – was responsible for the scar that stretched over half of his face.

It's either this or jail or living out her life as a fucking *Villain*. And she isn't... she's not that desperate.

She likes her own space – she's *thirty*, she's well fucking deserved it.

It is the only thing she'd thought to press when Endeavour made her the offer and his mouth had stretched knowingly.

One year at his Agency, serving directly beneath him, and he wouldn't pursue legal action against her. She'd signed the contract, there's no backing out now, too late for second guessing.

She enters the familiar number into the cheap phone, one she'd systematically added and deleted for months now, always a secret, something to keep for herself.

She barely manages a bite of her ice cream before it buzzes in response.

XXX-XXXXX-XX: Took your damn time.

-

"Todoroki Natsuo?"

She drops her backpack and plastic bags down on the floor in the hallway of the Todoroki household, pushing her sunglasses up and tugging her scarf down to reveal the stretch of her mouth as she takes in the white hair and grey eyes of the only Todoroki sibling she hadn't met so far

"Touya Katsuki." She bows formally, mockingly, feeling Endeavour's gaze burning into her. "Please treat me well."

Chapter End Notes

I... had a revelation.

Anyway, I got a headache from studying so I took a break and this happened.

Katsuki is using the formal "dozo yoroshiku onegai shimasu" at the end which comes across rather mockingly with her name and actions.

The kanji I chose for Touya means peach tree arrow which is why she makes the apples and peaches remarks.

Look, Mitsuki and Masaru aren't bad people but it's... a lot to come to terms with the fact that their son has been dead for eight years and they haven't known, they haven't had time to mourn. It's crappy all around and Katsuki knows it's a shitty thing she's done to them. It doesn't make it easier to accept but, well, that's life. Reasons doesn't justify the consequences of it.

I meant to cram in Best Jeanist into this chapter but I'll come around to him and Mina both, promise. And All Might. And class 1-A. And a lot of other characters. I have such *plans* for this story. All the beautiful plans... aaaah.

(You didn't think we were nearing the end, did ya?)

Your comments gives me life and I am endlessly thankful for them and for all the well-wishes. I'm going to nail the exam on Friday if it so kills me. I love you guys.

I hang about tumblr as artsy-death and this has been chapter 36 of In The End.

I hope you enjoyed!

Settling In

Chapter Notes

Half-n-Half = Todoroki Shouto

《Hey》 = sign-language

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Functioning is *exhausting*.

The idea of functioning inside the Todoroki household? It's... interesting for sure, Katsuki decides somewhere between three and five am when she's sprawled out in her new room and counting backwards, one hand pressed against the metal in her ear, the other flat against the scar tissue on her chest.

Distracted as her mind is she can almost imagine Dabi is right there with her.

There's something fucked-up about me, Katsuki acknowledges, smoothing her fingers against the scar where all nerves had been completely and utterly destroyed. There's no sensitivity left because Shigaraki had eroded any chance of it.

Sometimes Katsuki wonders if dying hadn't screwed her over in a way that's undeniably wrong. She's abstractedly aware of it, on some level, and she's not always sure how much she can really attribute to the sheer trauma of going from one reality to another.

She wonders if Mitsuki and Masaru might be right in not wanting a child like her.

She's not blind to the impact of her new name, to way Natsuo looks at her as if he's seen a ghost, to the wary depth of Fuyumi's eyes and the curl of Half-n-Half's mouth when he spares the time to look at her.

Katsuki, frankly, doesn't *care*.

It's not them she's after, it's not their ruin she's hounds for, it's Endeavour whose eyes and reactions she seeks as she smiles more teeth than lip.

He wants something from her – there is no other reason her being

inside these walls, living among his family.

But hell if Katsuki isn't going to level the field to the very best of her abilities.

-

Katsuki kicks a cupboard door shut and drops the bowl down next to the sink, dragging the carton of eggs closer. There's already assorted vegetables cut and diced down, spices lined up, and miso simmering on low heat on the stove, a pot of tea waiting and the coffee machine humming quietly as it works.

She'd found an apron stuffed into the very back in one of the drawers and she'd dusted it off and donned it because she has a *feeling* she knows just who'd it belonged to, what it means inside this household.

Katsuki is nothing if not an asshole.

Kick him where it hurts, her mind murmurs with some satisfaction as she finishes mixing it all together before pouring the thick mix into a waiting frying pan which hisses, bubbling and frothing before she turns the heat down.

She pours herself a mug of tea and leans back against the counter as footsteps threads quietly down the corridor before coming to a halt.

"Morning," Katsuki greets Fuyumi who peers about as if she doesn't quite know what to make of the situation.

Her hair has been neatly combed but it curls up a bit stubbornly in places, her clothes soft and feminine, unrumped as if afraid to be found at fault for something and berated for it.

Katsuki has... *opinions* and she figures, what the hell does she have left to lose?

Endeavour had, very publically in the Hero Society, taken her under his wing and invited her into his house and home. The very worst he can do is hurt her and Katsuki is intimately familiar with pain, strives on it, craves it in a way that she knows is dangerous.

She finds herself, for the first time since waking up in this world, in a position that doesn't demand that she hides what she is and that is dangerous as well.

“You made breakfast.” Fuyumi sounds a bit lost about it all and her eyes are very clearly fixed on the apron Katsuki had donned for herself. It’s a soft shade of blue with a little childish snowflake stitched onto the corner, clearly made by one of the children, possibly as a birthday gift to their now absent mother.

“I did,” Katsuki agrees with a hum. “Coffee? Tea? There’s orange juice on the table.”

Fuyumi’s eyes flickers to the table, perfectly set, and then back to Katsuki.

“... Tea, please, Touya-san.”

“Katsuki is fine.” She opens one of the cupboards, snagging an extra mug and pouring it. “Sugar, milk of plain?”

“Sugar.” Katsuki feels Fuyumi’s eyes at the back of her neck as she drops two cubes into the tea. “Thank you,” she says as she slowly accepts it, drawing it close to her chest, fingers curling around it as if she doesn’t quite know what to make of it.

“Did Endeavour say anything about me before my arrival?” Katsuki asks her, easing back against the counter.

“No,” Fuyumi admits, eyes searching. “Not more than to mention one of Shouto’s classmates were coming to stay with us.”

“I’m a woman,” she says bluntly, because Katsuki’s tactful like that. “And I’m thirty,” she adds, taking a sip of her tea as she regards Fuyumi’s grey eyes. “I died and then I was kinda stuffed into this body. It’s been a recent revelation to some people and I’m rolling about in the aftermath of it.”

“I-“ Fuyumi opens her mouth, closes it, blinking. “I see,” she says finally. “I am sorry to hear that.”

Katsuki had been in a bad place, mentally, during their last meeting. She is, quite possibly, in an even worse place now but there’s also another lack of *caring* that Katsuki curls protectively around because it’s easier than the opposite.

Fuyumi’s eyes fills with a contemplative sort of look and Katsuki keeps her gaze.

“Katsuki-chan, then,” she says finally with a smile that isn’t nearly as

warm as it had been during their first meeting but has the potential to be.

“Of course, Fuyumi-chan,” she agrees, raising her cup to hide the possibly fiendish curl of her lips.

-

Endeavour halts at the entrance of the kitchen as Katsuki slides a piece of omelette down onto the plate in front of Half-n-Half who looks positively stiff and wary, as if waiting for the other shoe to drop.

There’s an undeniable tension that coils through the Todoroki children, Natsuo straightening, Fuyumi’s head lowering, Half-n-Half’s mouth curling.

“What is this?” Endeavour’s hair is ruffled from sleep, his gaze focused on her where she stands in the middle of it all. The off-piece and center-piece alike in her blue apron among them.

“Breakfast.” Katsuki gestures, raising a brow. “Coffee or tea?” she asks, because he doesn’t strike her as a juice sort of person.

“... Coffee.”

She doesn’t ask if he wants any sugar, just slides the bowl and a pitcher of milk down in front of him and halves what’s left of the omelette between the two of them before dropping down into the seat beside him where she’d placed her cup of tea after Fuyumi had first made her appearance.

Back at Mitsuki and Masaru she’d had a chair that had become hers. She thinks it’s the kind of way with most households and this one is now hers.

In a traditional home like this it would have belonged to the wife of the family.

Katsuki is very much aware of what she’s doing.

“Bakugou-“

“Touya,” she corrects. “Legally changed and all.” She raises her eyes to meet his. “You’re the one who told me that wearing the name of a dead boy was in bad taste, was it not? I’m merely following your advice.”

She grabs for her fork, ignoring the knife, and cuts off a large piece before shoving it into her mouth.

Endeavour's fingers curl white knuckled and there's a feeling, rather akin to the table holding its collective breath, before he makes a low dismissive noise and grabs for the chopsticks she'd placed alongside the silverware and the room breathes out.

Katsuki mentally makes a note.

"Why are you here?" Half-n-Half demands after a long moment of Katsuki ignoring the tension and the others suffering through it.

"Your father here was kind enough to offer me a year of internship at his Agency," she says mildly, watching idly as Natsuo scraped some of the tomatoes to the side on his plate before flicking her gaze up to Half-n-Half's startled eyes.

"A year-" There's realization in his eyes, of just what this means, emotions flickering through his gaze too fast for her to get a good grasp on. "You're not returning to U.A.," he breathes.

"I am not," Katsuki agrees, putting her elbow up on the table, the one closest to Endeavour, and rests her chin in the palm of her hand. "It wouldn't really be a point to it considering I'm not really sixteen."

Natsuo, the only one not in on it, makes a strange sort of jerky motion with his chopsticks as his head snaps up towards her.

"Touya-" Katsuki internally delights in the way Endeavour's voice curls around the name, at the undertone of *something* she's going to poke and prod at until she gets a satisfactory response. "Your existence is meant to be kept under wraps."

"Family don't keep secrets," Katsuki tilts her head a fraction. "And we'll be living together for a *year*. It would be unfair, wouldn't you say? Shouto already knows after all." She flicks her gaze back to the second oldest Todoroki. "To make a long story short I died and then I woke up in this body. I'm actually thirty and a woman."

"I... see," Natsuo says slowly. "That sounds... complicated." His eyes darts to his father and then back to her and there's a curious sort of look to him in the depth of his gaze and the line of his mouth that slowly curls into a smile.

Natsuo and Dabi were the only ones who'd gotten out of this

household, who had had time to function outside Endeavour's influence. Katsuki thinks she understands in the way his shoulders slowly eases as he realises she isn't another child to be protected from his father's wrath.

She's never been good at guessing ages but she thinks he's late teens, possibly early twenties. She knows that Dabi is the oldest, then Fuyumi, Natsuo and finally Half-n-Half so she doubts she's far off.

"Training after breakfast" Endeavour rumbles beside her. "I want to evaluate your level."

"Of course," Katsuki agrees without protest. "It's only natural since we'll be working together Mr. Number One Hero."

And she thinks that Natsuo might understand what she's trying to accomplish here, at least a fraction of it, as his eyes glints momentarily with a dark sort of amusement as Endeavour's shoulders draw tight.

You don't scare me, Katsuki thinks as she digs into her omelette, drawing a startled Fuyumi into conversation about cooking after searching for something they're both familiar with. *I've gone up against Dabi's flames for years.*

You're nothing compared to him.

-

Katsuki isn't used to being proactive but her mind isn't in a good place not to be so she adjust herself accordingly.

It doesn't erase the exhaustion that crawls through her after breakfast as she sinks down on her bed and takes a moment to just breathe, her palm flattening against her chest, feeling the pounding of her heart through the scar tissue.

There's a knock on the door and then Half-n-Half slips inside without waiting for a response, closing it shut behind him as his mismatched eyes trail over her form.

"You put on a good show," he tells her, a small furrow to his brow.

Katsuki huffs, pulling her hand out and using her foot to hook her backpack towards her, pulling the zipper open as she bent down to rummage through it.

"I don't know what you mean – I'm positively the picture of good mental health."

"You're not-" Half-n-Half halts himself. "Why aren't you home?"

"I thought we already established that *this* will be my home for the next year." She pulls out a pair of dark sweats.

"They didn't take it well then," Half-n-Half observes shrewdly as she pulls her shirt over her head and his eyes dips unashamedly to take in the stretch of the purple gnarly scar tissue that made up her chest.

"Your parents."

"Not mine," she reminds him.

He shifts, turning his gaze away as she wormed out of her jeans and pulled the pants on, snagging the boots she'd bought and beginning the task of snaring them up.

"Touya-" He quiets, possibly because they're in enemy territory, possibly because her head snaps up with a warning in her eyes.

"Katsuki is fine," she says, baring her teeth. "No need for formalities – we're living together now *Shouto*."

"Of course," he agrees but there's an anxious sort of need to know in his eyes.

"You know," Katsuki says as she straightens out, not bothering with a shirt. "I was deaf in my past life."

He pauses, head tilting a fraction as she raises her hands.

《There are ways to talk without being overheard》 she signs to him, observing the realisation that settles into his eyes followed by an predatory sort of look.

She steps past him, opening the door.

"Good luck," he tells her back and there's depth to the words, layered with the wariness of a child who had faced violence and clawed his way through it.

"Oh, I'm not the one who'll need it," Katsuki flashes him a vicious sort of smile, red eyes dark with a promise of violence as she leaves him behind.

-

The room he'd told her to meet her in looks rather like a traditional dojo but Katsuki recognises fire proof material when she sees it and the walls, floor and roof are made of it. Despite that there's scorch marks in place where heat had burned long and hard, traces of ash despite what looks like a rather meticulous sort of cleaning.

Endeavour stands in the middle of it all, slacks traded for sweats, his feet bare and his body broad and muscled, drawing her eyes where he stands as a force of nature.

"You're-" Endeavour's voice halts and Katsuki blinks as his eyes snap up from her scarred, nipple less, flat chest. "Put on a shirt."

"There's nothing to cover," she says, a bit bemused.

"You're a woman," he growls quietly. "Show some decorum."

Katsuki gives him a flat look.

"It'll only burn up anyway." She rolls her shoulders, bending down to get a feel for just how much the new scar tissue hindered her movement.

Twitches as a piece of fabric lands on top of her head, one hand slowly rising to drag it down as she straightened up, giving it a blank look.

Switches her attention to a bare chested Endeavour who is positively *glowering*, still very much looking away from her.

Which is... *interesting*, Katsuki supposes, thumbing the fabric thoughtfully, recognising the possibly expensive heat resistance in the scrape against her finger pad. It wasn't something she'd ever be able to afford on her own, just like the headphones which had cut off more sound that had any business being restricted to the wealthy.

"Touya-" Endeavour growls impatiently.

Hissing out a sigh she pulls it on over her head, peering down to see the way it pooled. She's tall for her age, wired with muscles and settling into the broadening of her shoulders but she's nothing compared to the six foot four mountain of a man that stands across her.

He's got some eight inches on her, at the very least, not to even mention the bulging of his muscles that she cannot even begin to measure against. Possibly never would – Katsuki is just built differently, had always favoured speed and movement to back up her quirk.

She'd always liked getting close and personal but she's not suicidal.

She eyes the scar on Endeavour's face, the way it dips his mouth.

Most days, she amends.

"There," she says because he's *still* not looking at her and it's honestly a bit exasperating because there's nothing to *look at*.

He turns to give her a slow critical once over and she stiffens when he steps towards her, his eyes dragging from her feet and up, lingering momentarily on her hands and the scar tissue visible where the collar had slanted down.

"You sweat nitroglycerin – is it only limited to your hands?" he asks gruffly, mouth curling almost *thoughtfully*.

She blinks.

"No," she answers after a moment, studying him warily. "I usually keep them shut but I can use it with my feet as well."

"Remove your boots."

Katsuki isn't sure what she'd been expecting but this isn't *it* and it takes her a moment to kick her mind into gear and bend down, making sure to keep him within her line of sight as she tugged the knots up and wiggled them off, settling them aside before dragging one sock off at the time and stuffing them down into them.

Straightens out.

"Good," Endeavour's voice rumbles. "It was a clever sort of tactic to get close but if I had been anyone else you would have been dead." Katsuki feels the phantom sting where her arm had snapped under his bare grip. "It took me by surprise, it's the only reason you managed it."

Katsuki had banked on his surprise and the fact that, somewhere beneath the skin of this farce of a Hero was someone who'd managed

to climb to the seat of the Number Two Hero and *keep it*.

Her kidnapping had been very public and she understands from Shigaraki's words that losing her to the Villains would have been a blow against U.A. and, possibly, the Hero Society at large because of where she'd been placed as a student under All Might.

She's under the opinion that they severely overestimated her importance. They had evidence to support that All Might didn't like her, had *seen* something in her, and had a case to spin a good story for the public who'd swallow it up with eagerness.

But Heroes don't like to *lose*.

"It worked." She flashes a sharkish grin. "It suits you," she says, lingering quite deliberately on the scar on his face. "The familiar resemblance to Shouto is quite striking."

Endeavour's mouth pulls down and Katsuki recognises a sore point when she sees it even if she can't, for the life of her, place the *why*.

Half-n-Half's scar isn't made by flames – it looks more akin to the kind what might appear after boiling hot water and she's not sure who to credit it to. There's a reason Todoroki Rei isn't in the household but likewise there's a reason Endeavour's children watches him with wariness born out of fear.

This entire family is such a mess, Katsuki thinks, rolling her neck with a crack.

"We'll see." Endeavour shifts back and anticipation coils through Katsuki in response, the craving for violence rising through her razor sharp as she released the careful control of her quirk, flexing her fingers to feel the sweet familiar sting of nitroglycerin burn at her nose.

Her feet grow slick against the floor as she shifts, bending her knees.

Meets the turquoise eyes of the man Dabi wants dead as she explodes into movement, teeth flashing and eyes burning as flames flares out, covering his face, his arms and his shoulders.

-

Katsuki drops down, struggling for breath, her body so drained of liquid that her very lungs feels raw.

A bottle of water appears in her vision and she snags for it, chugging down a third before she remembers herself and halts, giving her body a chance to recognise and process it.

Her hair is plastered with sweat, her armpits, back and even her fucking thighs *slick* where the sheer ambient heat had wrenched it right out of her like a dirty rag.

Katsuki knows that Dabi can't use his quirk without his body reacting in response – a backlash painted in the scars on his body where he'd burnt in his very skin. He'd learn a fine sort of control of those blue flames but when pressed to use them to the max that control turned explosive and violent without thought for the repercussion of it.

Endeavour's use of his quirk is completely different. He'd raised the heat of the very room and then fed on it, exhausting her quicker than she'd anticipated, drying out the use of her own quirk which relied on her sweat to function.

It's fucking *clever*, she can't deny that, and she wipes her brow against the shoulder of the shirt he'd thrown at her.

She's bruised, her ribs aches and while she can't feel anything in the scar tissue of her chest there's plenty beneath it that hadn't taken too kindly to having one of those fiery fists slamming into her.

But there is, surprisingly, nothing that sleep and a good cover of aloe vera wouldn't take care of and it says something of his understanding of his own strength.

"Decent," Endeavour tells her. "You have a rough sort of basis of a self-stylised form but while you're adept at reacting and adjusting you lack the proper tools to make the best out of it. You understand your limits well-enough and you picked-up on what I was doing fairly quick, but there's always room for improvement."

Katsuki takes a long swallow of her water, her breathing slowly calming as she cooled down from the oppressive heat that had been reigned in.

"It's clear that you're familiar with working against a fire quirk user," Endeavour remarks.

She lifts her head to stare at him as he regards her in turn.

"At least you haven't squandered the potential of your body," he says

and Katsuki doesn't really know how to respond to that though the words *your body* gets processed with a twitch of her fingers. "In a month's time you will take the provisional Hero licence exam and you will pass it. Until then I expect you once every morning and evening in here."

There's a smattering of burns near his ribs and on his collarbone where the shirt she's wearing might have protected him but he hardly seems to notice it.

Katsuki sprawls back, tilting her head as she watches him leave.

Clever, uncompromising and violent – this world's new Number One Hero.

What a terrifying thought, she thinks, closing her eyes and breathing out.

Chapter End Notes

My understanding of Endeavour is that he's a pretty traditional guy, in some senses, and then not, in others. I don't know, I'm having a fun time contemplating him because I always try to sorta... wiggle my way to the bottom of things when it comes to characters. Canon only allows us to understand so much of them.

Anyway! We are still doing the provisional hero exam! Aren't you guys just as excited as I am? (me, crying internally: why so many fighting scenes).

Just to clarify, because I couldn't find a way to do it neatly in the story, it's not her gender he's referring to when Endeavour says to keep her secrets under wraps, just the age thing. We'll hash that out more but just so we're on the same page on that.

I'm so excited to go back to respond to your comment!! You truly and honestly make my day, so blessed.

I hang about tumblr as artsy-death if you want to swing by there and this has been chapter 37 of *In The End*.

I hope you enjoyed!

Visitors

Chapter Notes

Half-n-Half = Todoroki Shouto

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Katsuki pauses, turning around at the sound of knocking, an oven glove on her hand to balance the hot fish stew she'd pulled from the oven.

The kitchen smells of the sauce she'd cooked it in and it's bubbling in its pot, covered with a generous layer of golden brown cheese.

She places it carefully on the stove when no Todoroki makes an immediate appearance, pulling the glove off and tucking it beneath her armpit as she ambled her way over and pulled it open with a twist of the handle.

Katsuki registers Aizawa first – mainly because he's dressed up in a black suit, a decidedly weird turn from his normal ensemble.

It takes her a second more to place the blond haired *wreck* beside him but Katsuki had seen the footage, the flash of blue eyes and the words that had rung out with the defeat of All For One.

She'd turned it off, feeling uncomfortable where she lied in the hospital bed, more bandage than skin, hearing the words *you're next* crawling through her mind.

It's not quite possible to turn off the world and Katsuki finds herself *staring* because if he'd looked unhealthy on the small television it is nothing compared to the reality. His cheeks are completely shrunken, his eyes peering out through dark shadows in his face, making the blue of his eyes downright fucking *eerie*. He hadn't adjusted to his new size at all – clothes hanging on his form, as if prepared to puff up any second, and the sheer length and gangly state of his limbs made him look almost bug-like where he stood.

Even his rabbit hair had just flopped to hang down in choppy long bangs and the entire thing is just absolutely fucking miserable to comprehend.

This is who she'd been afraid of? This man who looked like a gust of

wind would blow him over?

Don't you fucking eat? Katsuki wonders, morbidly curious as to the *how*. Who'd allowed the world's Symbol of Peace to just *rot away* in his own skin?

"Touya." She twitches, turning her attention back to Aizawa. "I see you're settling in," he says drily and Katsuki looks down automatically, taking in the blue apron with the little sloppy bow and the orange slippers Half-n-Half had given her on her first visit. She's in another one of the knitted sweaters with neon patters that made her weirdly nostalgic but didn't really match up with anything.

She huffs, dragging a hand through the fringe of her new undercut as she stepped aside. "Who are you here for?" she asks shortly as they take the invitation, door clicking shut as she pulled down two pair of guest slippers and dropped them onto the floor.

"Not you," Aizawa says, toing out of his shoes and trading them for the blue slippers. All Might mirrors him with a sort of painful care that wouldn't have looked odd from an eighty-year-old man. But All Might had to be, what? Forty? Fifty at most?

Katsuki forces herself not to stare because *who the fuck let this skeleton out of the hospital?*

"This time," Aizawa amends, straightening up. "Unfortunately we have a whole list to go through." He looks completely exhausted at the admittance and quite unwillingly Katsuki finds her mouth twitching.

"Are you visiting the whole class? What for?" she asks, glancing down the corridor. "I think Shouto is in his room. I'll text him." She fishes for the phone as Aizawa gives her a mildly amused look.

"We're opening up the dorms at U.A.," he explains as he looks around critically, All Might lurking like a silent stringy shadow behind him and Katsuki feels his eyes on her. "Your kidnapping was something of a wake-up call and we're doing our best to make sure nothing like it happens again."

Katsuki's thumb pauses on the screen but finally presses send before sliding it back into her pocket.

"I... see," she says shortly, a strange feeling curling in her chest. "Long conversation then?"

“That’s likely,” Aizawa agrees. “Endeavour is... notoriously difficult.”

Katsuki snorts. “That’s a description.” She rubs a hand against the back of her neck, spares All Might a glance before looking away, stomach churning, her mouth strangely dry. “You can wait in the living room,” she says finally. “There’s food,” she offers a bit awkwardly.

“It smells good.” Aizawa reaches out and Katsuki suppresses the instinctive curl of her shoulders, suffering through the ruffling of her hair though she spares him a dry look. “Lunch would be lovely.”

“Lovely, he says,” she grumbles, eyeing All Might. “You need some special cost?”

He gives a twitchy sort of jerk and it’s so fucking *off* from the proud muscled form of the All Might that had sent terror spiralling through her that she feels fucking *cheated*.

“I-“ He coughs blood and Katsuki takes a step back, fingers curling as she stares at him as he fishes for a napkin, Aizawa looking completely at ease next to him. “Nothing too heavy, Ba-“ He halts himself, looking positively *embarrassed*. “Touya-san. Thank you.” He makes a strange motion, as if to bow, but catches himself, looking rather like he didn’t know what to do with himself in his own body.

Katsuki stares at him, wondering if she was having a particularly bad fever dream.

“It’s white fish in sauce with diced tomatoes and some shrimp. There’s cheese on top but you can probably scrape it off.”

She turns on her heel, intent on disappearing into the kitchen as she caught the sound of Half-n-Half’s soft footsteps, but pauses at the call of her name, glancing warily over her shoulder to meet blue eyes.

“I’m- I’m glad you’re looking well,” All Might says and there’s something heavy and complicated in his gaze.

“I was a fucking mess last time we saw each other you mean?” she asks drily. “Don’t really remember much of it.” She grimaces. “Dissociating tend to fuck with my memory.”

All Might coughs, pressing the napkin to his lips. “You blew up All For One’s leg.”

Katsuki bares her teeth with some satisfaction. “Did I? Fuckers deserved it.” There’s a hazy memory of shoes and a flash and Dabi’s exasperated face.

“All Might? Aizawa-sensei?” Half-n-Half looks ruffled and strangely tired considering it was nearing lunch but his eyes are sharp as he glances between the three of them, lingering on All Might for a moment before turning to raise an eyebrow at her.

She shrugs – they’d explain it to him, that’s why they were *there*.

“Is Natsuo still around or has he left?” she asks. “Lunch is done. Fuyumi is out, hell if I know when she’s getting back but I’m not thinking anytime soon.”

Katsuki was actually counting on it. It was unnerving to realise how fucking *tied* Fuyumi was to the house. Taking care of the chores, cooking breakfast, lunch, dinner and just – *making things easier*.

It had taken her days of resisting the urge to just *kick her the fuck out* and making it clear that the household wouldn’t collapse if she just took a day for herself.

It wasn’t exactly strange – children who didn’t get positive reinforcement often found ways to be valued anyway. Daughters often took up household chores to sort of... try and keep their families together? Especially in cases of absent mothers.

At least that’s what her late night searches claimed when Katsuki had made an attempt to understand why Fuyumi was so resistant to her very blunt shouldering. Psychology had never been Katsuki’s fine point and trying to understand her own case just made her exhausted so she tended to avoid thinking too hard about it.

Half-n-Half tilts his head. “He left after breakfast. He keeps things here and at college to avoid having to bring his things back and forth.”

She grunts in acknowledgement.

“I’ll fetch Endeavour, he’s probably lurking in the fucking gazebo again.”

Half-n-Half gives her a look but Katsuki kicks off her slippers and tugs the apron over her head, throwing it at him along with the oven glove, hearing both All Might and Aizawa greet him behind her along with Half-n-Half’s curious voice as she threaded her way down the

bare corridors of the Todoroki household.

She'd been in the household for a week and if there's something Katsuki is starting to understand it's that Endeavour is a creature of habit. Whether it's because he can't stand spending time with his family or he had a truly bizarre appreciating for his yard she doesn't particularly care to know or ask.

Morning and evenings were dedicated to training, the days to doing whatever Pro Heroes did, and when he was home he tended to alternate between his office, the yard or a room in the house that had been made very clear was none of her business.

She spares a second to peer into the office, finds it empty, and slides the door to the porch open, pausing as she took a moment blink as the green grass flickered yellow, the large cherry blossom tree in the middle of it all crawling green with lush red apples.

It comes and goes with a grimace of her mouth as she presses her palm flat against the side of her head.

"Fucking All For One," she hisses out, frustrated with how fucking unbalanced he'd left her.

Grumbling she steps into the grass, feeling it tickle soft against the soles of her feet as it bent beneath her weight.

Endeavour is standing up, his back to her, studying something, but his head tilts a fraction and he slides it into the pocket of his pants with a fold of old creases before turning to look at her.

"You have guests," she tells him flatly. "And lunch is ready."

"Fuyumi?" He's in a dress shirt, red against the beige of his slacks, but his feet are as bare as her own and they're broad and steady where he stands.

"Out," Katsuki says shortly. "She mentioned something about an old friend."

There's a brief flicker of something like surprise in those eyes of his and Katsuki stuffs her hands into the pocket of her jeans.

"Your doing I assume?" Endeavour makes no attempt to step away from the gazebo, apparently content to leave his guests waiting. "You haven't been subtle," he says with that heavy voice of his. "I haven't

interfered but I am not blind.”

“I didn’t say anything.”

“You didn’t need to.” He sounds amused of all things and she raises an eyebrow at him. “No matter what you might think I never forced her to take up the chores of this household. I was content to leave it to the service folk but she insisted.”

“You never wondered why?” Katsuki asks with a tilt of her head.

“I had more important things to deal with.” He steps towards her, finally, and Katsuki’s fingers twitches but she does not flinch, she does not cover, even as he pauses in front of her, forcing her to crane her head up to keep his gaze.

“You are not part of this family. I will allow you to have your fun for now because I see no harm to it but the moment that changes you and I will have a *conversation*.”

“Will we now?” Katsuki flashes her teeth. “I suppose if the *Number One Hero* says it-“

His palm slams into the wood of the gazebo and his eyes narrows as he bends down towards her, eyes dark, dangerous, the scent of ash heavy in his breath.

“You play a dangerous game, girl,” he growls at her.

“Don’t we all? Living in this world?” Katsuki challenges, muscles coiling.

He breathes out a stream of greyish smoke that tickles at her nose. "Don't push me, you won't like the consequences of it," he promises her before he draws back and steps past her.

Katsuki clenches her hands in her pockets.

“Hey, Endeavour?”

He pauses and she leans against the wood beside her, ignoring the impression of his hand that had burnt into the white painted structure.

“All Might looks like a fucking breeze will do him over. Do you Heroes just not take responsibility for your own?” He shifts, just enough to look at her, eyes dark and unreadable. “Because that’s pretty fucked-up.”

He scoffs and Katsuki watches him until he's disappeared into the house, breathing out as she dragged a hand through her hair before dropping down in the grass.

It's not that she *cares*. She doesn't like All Might. He's a grown man and he'd beaten her half to death when he was still under the assumption that she was a sixteen-year-old boy and she can't just *forget that*.

But he'd been this world's *symbol* and-

Katsuki buries her face into her hands.

What's in a Hero?

The more she learns, the more she understands of it, the more she thinks that there's a point of reason to Shigaraki's words when he says it needs to be razed to the ground. There's too much that's been put into system and too many that are a part of it, keeping it alive when it shouldn't be.

Heroes, Villains, a world without war, the memories of a world in constant turmoil.

Is there really a way to change the Hero Society without dragging it into a full-scale war? Katsuki doubts it. The thought makes nausea rise at the back of her throat because she'd spent years watching clip after clip after clip on the television. She'd been spared from it because of where she'd been born but she's not ignorant to the consequences and aftermath of it.

Katsuki knows her moral compass isn't the best. She cares for Dabi and Himiko both, knowing full well they both have blood on their hands, kill counts in double digits. She doesn't care. She's a selfish person in many ways and she's never tried to pretend she's not.

She doesn't-

She doesn't understand this world or its people, the acceptance and celebration of powers that leaves her terrified.

Heroes and Villains, good quirks and bad quirks. It's all just the same shit in the end.

She shifts her hands behind her, reclining back as she tilts her head to look up into the impossibly blue sky above her, streams of soft white

clouds and the shining light of the sun casting its warm glow upon her.

A shiver run through her and can almost feel the cold rain that had fallen onto her dying body as she drowned.

Shigaraki isn't going to stop, Dabi wants Endeavour dead, undoubtedly there's more that will seize the opportunity that the fall of All Might lends to because the Symbol of Peace has been reduced to nothing but a shadow of himself.

He meant something to this world and there's turmoil in the wake of that. He'd shouldered too much and his fall had left the world unbalanced.

If Deku is expected to fulfil the role, to grow into it under All Might's guidance, it would still take years yet. He's younger than even the body she's in, recently sixteen if the boy's memories are to be trusted, and All Might has no right shouldering him with such a burden, no matter how desperate he might be.

Katsuki doesn't like Deku but he's still a fucking *child*.

It's an ugly thing to put the safety of the world on a boy so fanatically obsessed with the Hero that he could see no wrong in his actions. It's an abuse of power, frankly, and All Might should have done something *years ago*.

But he *hadn't*.

And that's the problem, isn't it? There are no back-up plans other than a boy too young and a man who wouldn't measure up to what the Symbol of Peace had been with what he was now, incapable of even seeing the broken and bleeding pieces of his own family.

One son a Villain intent on seeing him dead, another quietly resentful, a third built from terror and resentment and a daughter who'd tried to step up and fill a role she never should have needed to had he been doing his fucking *job* as a parent.

And then there is Todoroki Rei and Katsuki only knows about her because of a brief mention from Dabi whose bitterness had been stark enough to keep her from pressing.

Katsuki had been under the illusion that she'd have *time*.

The world had been a strange and terrifying place but she'd thought that, maybe following the boy's dream would give her a sense for what it might be like to be born in this world.

Three years and a reassurance that his parents would support her if she decided on something else.

But Mitsuki and Masaru call her by a name that belongs to a dead woman because the son they thought they'd loved is dead.

She isn't *him*.

She's not enrolled in U.A. anymore and she's living with a man she doesn't trust or like to avoid being sentenced to jail. Dabi and Himiko are getting deeper and deeper into Villain business and Shigaraki had made it clear he's still interested in her.

There is *no time*.

It's just a fucking countdown to *disaster* and Katsuki, frankly, has no way to step back from the business of Heroes and Villains anymore because no one will allow her to.

She doesn't like it but she can't ignore it either, no-matter how the frustration and anger tangles inside of her with something far more ugly.

-

She's still sprawled out in the yard when Half-n-Half comes to find her nearly two hours later, dropping down beside her and nudging her side with his bare foot to a twitch and an arm reluctantly lifting to give him a flat look.

"I accepted it," he tells her.

Katsuki drops her arm down. "I know," she huffs, tired and a bit dizzy from the heat of the sun but quite unable to make herself move.

"I spoke with Aizawa-sensei and he says arrangements can be made to allow me home during the weekends when I go to visit kaa-san. There are times when I won't be able to but--"

"I'll keep an eye on Fuyumi," she interrupts him.

Half-n-Half quiets, silence stretching for a moment. And then there's a rustle and Katsuki's eyes snaps open, her body tensing as his head

dropped quite unceremoniously to rest on her belly, shoulders wiggling as he made himself comfortable.

“What-“

“You looked like you needed it,” Half-n-Half says, folding his hands on his chest. “And you’re being an idiot.”

“... What the fuck is that supposed to mean?” Katsuki growls, wired tense, muscles bunching uncomfortably as cold seeped into her skin to a brief shiver.

A sigh of cool mist lets her know he was doing it quite deliberately.

“Everyone knows you got kidnapped and then rescued but now you’re suddenly not returning to class and you haven’t contacted anyone. It was announced on the television that you’re now going to be working with my father and my phone has been buzzing nonstop for days now.”

Half-n-Half turns his head to look up at her.

“They’re worried about you.”

“... It’s none of your business.”

“It is.” He gives her a searching look. “Ashido really cares for you. You’re not doing either of you a favour by avoiding her.”

Katsuki squeezes her eyes shut.

“I know,” she admits finally. “I *know* but-“

“You’re scared.”

Her mouth twists but she doesn’t deny it because Katsuki is fucking *terrified*.

“It is weird,” Half-n-Half says quite bluntly. “I’m still trying to wrap my head around the fact that you’re twice my age and that’s not even touching the fact that you’re from another *world* -“

Katsuki’s muscles bunches painfully tight.

“But if it’s weird to me I can’t even imagine how it must have been like for you,” he says finally and her fingers twitches. “You’re still *you*.” He gives her a surprisingly kind look. “You had your reasons for

keeping quiet on things and I think I ultimately understand why you did that. You don't trust easily and when you—" He pauses, searching for the word. "You weren't in your right mind."

"I dissociated," Katsuki supplies, eyes fixated on him. "Sometimes my mind forgets or mixes things up and I remember more of the woman and less of who I am now."

"Dissociated, then," he agrees, a thoughtful look passing briefly through his eyes before settling into something more troubled. "You were *scared*. You were in a body you didn't recognize, your quirk terrified you and you believed you'd just been killed." He breathes out. "You were in a bad place and I don't know how many years you've spent keeping it to yourself but that kind of thing doesn't just go away. When I invited you over here the first time I did so knowing that All Might had unsettled you on some level. I think I understand better now that he aggravated an underlying issue that was already there and, perhaps unintentionally, made it far worse."

Katsuki's chest twists oddly as she stares at him.

"You're not alone anymore," *Shouto* tells her. "Don't allow my father to cut you off completely from the people who genuinely cares for you."

Chapter End Notes

Our boy Shouto bringing some truth to the table.

I think it's important to recognize that Katsuki finds herself in a situation that puts a lot of pressure on her and this chapter was mostly sorting out some of her thoughts surrounding that.

It's... messy.

The dorms are still opening up and Shouto is still moving out because he doesn't deserve to be stuck in an abusive household, thank you very much. Coincidentally this also allows for some interesting things in the future so keep your eyes peeled because we're not about to just leave Class 1-A behind in this story.

The All Might situation is also far from resolved, I'm not going to just let it be, but time and place, I guess? We'll sort things out, promise.

Thank you for all your wonderful comments you guys, never fails

to make my day. So blessed, so happy, so soft for you all. Don't hesitate to ask questions if there's anything you're wondering about.

You can find me as artsy-death on tumblr if you're about there and this has been chapter 38 of In The End.

I hope you enjoyed!

Reunion

Chapter Notes

Froggy = Asui

Sparky = Kaminari

Punk = Jirou

Round Cheeks = Uraraka

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

”You drive a car, don’t you?”

Katsuki is slumped over on the table, rolling a lemon back and forth a bit absently, watching idly as Fuyumi prepared lunch. She had quite firmly been nudged down to wait with a cup of steaming tea and Katsuki had allowed it with some amusement.

It had happened sooner than she’d expected, Fuyumi putting her foot down. Katsuki hadn’t exactly been discreet with her pushing and it was good to see some spirit from the younger woman.

”I do,” Fuyumi admits. ”You need a ride?” She slices neatly through the salmon before curling them carefully with a precise sort of care onto the waiting plate where cherry tomatoes had been turned into little flower-like shapes.

It had been almost four days since Shouto had left and he’d been given a week to settle in before the new term begun. Katsuki had spent the day of his leaving mostly keeping out of the way as boxes were packed and prepared.

”If you don’t mind,” Katsuki says, eyeing Fuyumi’s effortlessly elegant movements.

She’d been... drawn to Fuyumi on their first meeting. Katsuki had never been much of a people person and her first eight years in this world had been Mitsuki and Masaru and then later Dabi and finally Himiko before U.A. happened. Her only other interactions had been teachers and doctors and teenagers who took offense to her very existence.

But Fuyumi...

”How old are you?” she asks quite abruptly.

Fuyumi pauses, turning to look at her over her shoulder. "Twenty-two."

Katsuki's mouth curls against the folds of her arms.

"You said you're thirty, right?" Fuyumi rolls the last piece of salmon and slides it onto the table before seating herself with a brush of her hand to make sure her skirt settled properly.

Katsuki reluctantly straightens up, sliding the lemon into her pocket before reaching for the chopsticks that had been placed neatly beside her as she drags her plate closer.

"Yeah."

Fuyumi scoops rice into their waiting bowls, miso into another, and Katsuki busies herself with stealing a generous amount of salmon and tomatoes to the small rectangular plate, arranging them into a zigzag patterns of red and pink.

"Do you mind if I ask you something?"

Katsuki blinks, turning her head up. Fuyumi's grey eyes are attentive but there's a thoughtful crease to her brows.

"s fine." Katsuki shrugs, reaching for one of the slices of lemon and drizzling it over generously.

"How old were you when you died?"

Katsuki pauses. "Ah." She wipes her hand on her napkin and then slumps back in her seat. "Twenty-two," she admits.

"I thought it might be something like that," Fuyumi says and Katsuki tilts her head. "You have a peculiar sort of way of watching me."

Katsuki's ears grows warm and her fingers cramps around her chopsticks as she lowers her head. "Sorry," she says awkwardly.

"I don't mind," Fuyumi says with a soft sigh. "I don't know the circumstances that brought you here but twenty-two... It can't have been easy, dying so young." Fuyumi looks towards the window, the sun shining soft on her face. "There is a lot I want to do in life, things I want to experience. To be robbed of that... I would be devastated."

Katsuki's shoulders draws tight, not sure what to say.

"I'm sorry," Fuyumi says suddenly, pushing up her glasses as she looks back to Katsuki. "I understand if it might not be a comfortable topic for you."

"It's fine," Katsuki says shortly.

Fuyumi gives her a lingering look and then she mercifully changes the subject.

-

"A bike store?"

"You live in the middle of fucking nowhere." Katsuki peers at the closest bike, prodding it a bit doubtfully before ambling past it to the next row. "This body is too young for a licence but a bike..."

Fuyumi tucks her hair behind her ear as a breeze blows past them, humming thoughtfully.

"I don't mind driving you."

"You have your own life," Katsuki grumbles, giving a purple bike a careful once over, stroking her fingers over the handle and giving the bell a flick.

"What about this one?"

Katsuki turns around and pauses. Full suspension steel bridge, a generally streamlined look and with a good pair of breaks. A waterbottle holder had been secured to it, along with a pump and just beneath a saddle were a small toolkit for on the road small fixes. It lacked a back rack but there's a metal pin on either side of the back wheel where someone might be able to stand.

It's clearly the murky yellow splatter that stretched out into a petal like pattern against the black that had drawn Fuyumi's gaze, however.

Katsuki considers that with a tilt of her head.

-

"Here." Katsuki blinks at the proffered helmet, accepting it carefully. "It matches your bike," Fuyumi says with a smile and Katsuki gives the small yellow flower against the black a dubious look. "You sure you'll find your way back on your own?"

“Ah.” She pulls it down, clicking it shut beneath her chin. “I’ll probably do some exploring beforehand,” Katsuki says, adjusting her backpack before straddling her new bike. “Might not make it back for dinner.”

Fuyumi pauses. “I’ll let my father know,” she says, stepping back with a look that Katsuki just catches and which makes her mouth dip down.

“Do you have his number?” She pulls her phone from her pocket and holds it out. “It’s not your responsibility to play middle-hand,” she says shortly at Fuyumi’s look. “I’ll let him know.”

Fuyumi hesitates but ultimately adds it along with her own number before handing it back.

Katsuki spares a moment to write out a message to Endeavour before muting her notifications and slipping it back.

“Take care, Katsuki-chan!” Fuyumi waves at her as she straddles the saddle with a push forward and Katsuki waves a hand over her shoulder as she takes a right, gravel scraping beneath the tires.

It’s no motorcycle but the wind whipping past her face is nostalgic all the same and she banks a hard left, bending her knees before lurching the bike up onto the sidewalk and ignores the startled exclamation as she swerves past an elderly couple, trading concrete for grassy ground with a grin.

-

The back wheel lifts from the ground as her abrupt halt before settling down and Katsuki’s right sneaker hits the ground. She gets judgemental stares from the people in line ahead of her which she ignores as she slips off it and presses down on the kickstand.

It’s lightweight and Katsuki hauls it up easily once the bus arrives, pressing her newly bought card to the reader with a flash of green before taking up the entire place meant for baby strollers and flashes her teeth at the bus driver when he peers back towards her.

He ducks back and the bus rocks into motion with a low rumble.

It’s a thirty minute ride to U.A. and Katsuki spends most of the time staring out the window, anxiety knotting harder and harder inside of her until she’s shifting restlessly, arms folded, fingers digging into her

biceps, and mouth curled down as she forces herself to remain where she is as one stop is traded for another.

Katsuki knows herself. She could just as easily have taken the bike all the way, cutting corners and made it there in twenty. But the tension wires her tight and she would have found some excuse half-way there.

Ten minutes before arrival she sends a text to Aizawa, trying to ignore the nausea crawling at the back of her throat as the bus finally came to a halt outside the large familiar walls of the school.

She drags her bike off and removes her helmet to hang it the handle as she forces her feet to move towards the entrance where a familiar black clad figure waits for her, capture scarf around his neck and dark eyes watching her as she comes to a halt in front of him.

“About time,” Aizawa grunts, as if he’d been *expecting her* the bastard.

Katsuki gives him a flat look.

“Your classmates have been quite bothersome,” he informs her, slipping her a pass which her fingers curls around before she looks down.

TOUYA KATSUKI

U.A. ALUMNUS

“I didn’t really graduate.” Katsuki strokes her thumb over the picture.

“Nedzu approved it,” Aizawa says with a shrug, slipping his hands into the pockets of his pants. “You didn’t watch the statement from Endeavour, did you?”

Katsuki gives him a wary look. “Should I have?”

“You might find it interesting,” Aizawa says with a secretive smile. “Come on, best get this over with.”

Katsuki hangs the pass around her neck and grips the handlebars of her bike, falling in at Aizawa’s side as she peers up at the school. It’s nearing six pm, classes were long over and there’s a strange hush in place of the excited chatter that she’d come to anticipate.

“I take it you didn’t tell anyone you’re coming.”

“Wasn’t sure I’d actually make it here,” Katsuki grumbles, grip

tightening as she follows Aizawa a good bit from the school structure and then down a road towards a large building with 1-A ALLIANCE on a broad sign in front of it.

“I thought this was all about discretion and safety.”

“Ah.” Aizawa’s gaze is flat. “Nedzu had... opinions.”

Katsuki grunts noncommittally.

The sky is just starting to darken and the light from the large windows allows her view of familiar faces as she comes to a halt.

Distantly she makes note of Froggy and Round Cheeks, Sparky gesturing enthusiastically to Punk a step behind them in bean like bags that looked ready to swallow them up.

But her eyes are locked on Mina who is grinning at whatever Round Cheeks is saying, bags beneath her eyes and a slight strain to her lips. Pink skin, pink hair, those peculiar golden irises set in a sclera of black. She’s in a soft sweater and shorts, her feet bare, and every inch as beautiful as Katsuki remembers her.

She’s here, she’s here, she’s here-

“Breathe,” Aizawa reminds her and she sucks in a breath, allowing the bike to be tugged out of her grip and parked at the side of the road.

“I’m telling her,” Katsuki tells him roughly. “I know I’m not supposed to but-“

“She’s your friend,” Aizawa says and Katsuki looks to him, her chest rising and falling. “Do what you have to do.”

Katsuki swallows and then she gives a jerky nod and steps away from him, gravel crunching beneath her sneakers as she makes her way towards the building and up the stairs, pressing her pass against the machine next to the door and gets a green light.

She pushes it open and steps inside with a click as it slides shut behind her.

There’s a crash as the plate that had been in Shitty Hair’s hands drops to the floor and the sound of chatter dies around her as a number of eyes snaps towards her in varying states of shock and surprise.

She draws a slow centering breath and then turns towards Mina who’d

frozen on the couch, hands slowly falling from where she'd been gesturing.

Katsuki had thought about what she'd wanted to say – excuses that now clutter together at the back of her mind and she exhales roughly.

“Hi,” she says lamely, stuffing her hands into the pocket of her jeans as her mouth curls unsure and awkward where she stands.

“Hi?” Katsuki tenses at the sound of Mina's voice, shoulders drawing tight. “I haven't seen you for more than a *month* and that's what all you have to say!?” Her bare feet hits the ground and Katsuki curbs the instinctive flinch as she covers the distance between them.

Distantly she hears a hush of exchanged voices, a bid for quiet and a low hiss.

“I'm-“ Katsuki drags her hands out of the pocket of her jeans and then she bows low, squeezing her eyes shut. “I'm sorry.”

“You-“

“Can we talk?” Katsuki interrupts. “In private,” she tacks on, straightening up cautiously, neck prickling at the attention on them.

Mina looks at her, brows furrowing, and Katsuki feels the distance between them with a sickening lurch in her belly. There's cautiousness and something Katsuki doesn't understand in those golden eyes that watches her as pink fingers curls tight enough that the white of her bone pushes up against her skin.

“Fine,” Mina says shortly, turning on her heel.

“Hey- are you sure?” Sparky calls in surprise, flicking Katsuki a wary look. “I hear he's been making friends with *Villains*.”

Katsuki twitches, lips pulling back to bare her teeth.

Blinks as Punk elbows his stomach to a wheeze of surprise as he swivelled around towards her.

“Don't be stupid, Kaminari,” Punk says with an exasperated look before flicking her purple eyes to Katsuki. “Ashido doesn't need protecting.”

Katsuki breathes out, forcing down her annoyance, and takes a stiff step forward as Mina makes her way to the stairs.

It feels heavy, strange, each press of her sneakers against the fine wooden flooring. U.A. clearly hadn't spared an expense, doing their absolute best to make sure it felt like a home and Katsuki wonders what it might have been like to live here with them.

"The girls were assigned the right wing," Mina tells her and Katsuki jerks at the sound of her voice, head snapping up. "There's five floor in total, I'm on the fourth."

"Ah," Katsuki grunts in agreement, eyeing the stairs.

There's an elevator as well and she finds herself thankful Mina had chosen the stairs – the idea of being stuffed into such a close proximity makes her want to scratch her skin off.

They reach the fourth floor and Mina stops in front of the first door on the right, fishing a key from her pocket and giving it a twist in the lock before pushing it open.

There's an underlying scent of something acidic in the air, familiar knick-knacks strewn about and the other half of the birthday t-shirt set scrunched up on the unmade bed. The colour theme of dark pink glaring in the wide spread of the curtains and there's a small table covered in a blanket to her immediate right where a cup of tea rests now cold.

There's pictures on the wall, of Mina with her parents, with their classmates, old friends and what she supposes might be relatives.

Katsuki's eyes linger on the copy of the one from her birthday party as she drops her backpack to the ground.

A picture of Mina and herself, arms looped together, STNE ING FUCK CHESBIT spelled out on their matching shirts, a glittery party hat sticking out between two yellow antennae, her own hanging slanted against her chest where she'd shoved it down, her face pink and glowering beside the other girl who is grinning bright and wide.

She wonders if her own still hangs on the wall above the bed or if his parents had torn it down, trying to erase the traces of her existence in their son's room.

Katsuki carefully pushes the door shut behind them as Mina turns on her heel.

"Well?" she demands, mouth drawing into a thin, tense line. "Why are

you here?"

Katsuki struggles not to wince, knowing she deserves the anger.

It had been some seven weeks since her kidnapping and while she'd spent a week with the League, and almost two recovering in the hospital, she had no excuses for the rest of the time when she'd denied any and all visitors.

"I'm—" Her voice comes out rough, dry, and she licks her lips. "I came here because you deserve the truth."

Mina pauses, brows dipping down.

"The truth?" she repeats sceptically, arms folding up. "Not going to make any excuses?"

"You deserve better." Katsuki drags a hand through her hair and shrugs. "You might not want to hear them, given what I have to say."

Mina gives her an unreadable look and then breathes out. "Why do you always make everything so difficult for yourself?"

Katsuki balks. "Excuse me—"

"Sit down." Mina points for the bed and Katsuki's foot jerks forward before she catches herself, the tips of her ears turning red as she sunk down with as much dignity she could muster.

Mina's mouth twitches before she smothers it down into something more serious and she claims the chair at the desk for herself after tugging it out.

"I'm—" Katsuki breathes out. "I'm going to be fucking blunt," she says finally. "I haven't been completely honest about myself and I'm not supposed to talk about it. Hell if I know why but- what I say stays in this room, alright?"

"You know it does," Mina huffs.

"I died," Katsuki blurts out and then grimaces when Mina jerks straight up, mouth opening. "Not – during the kidnapping. Well – that too but that's not—" Katsuki stumbles and quiets, squeezing her eyes shut. "I died a twenty-two-year-old deaf woman in another world," she says in a rush, opening her eyes and staring down at her lap. "Roughly eight years ago I woke up in this body because the original

owner fell off a bridge and he didn't survive it."

There's a stretch of silence where Katsuki hesitantly raises her head and then furrows her brows because Mina-

"That's it?"

Katsuki stares at her.

"What?" she says weakly.

"*That* doesn't explain why you spent over a *month* ignoring me, well after Aizawa-sensei told me that you were allowed to have visitors. You haven't answered my calls-

"I don't actually have my phone," Katsuki tries.

"- *after* I got your new number from Todoroki and you turn up, out of the blue, to tell me that *eight years ago* you died and became *you*. As if that's supposed to explain *anything*." Mina narrows her eyes. "And we will talk about that, don't think we won't, but those reasons were still there three months ago, four months ago, *five* months ago. It doesn't explain *why now*."

Katsuki clenches her fists. "Mitsuki-san and Masaru-san didn't take it well."

"Of course they didn't!" Mina scowls at her. "And you *knew* they wouldn't because they cared for the Bakugou Katsuki that was but I have absolutely no reason to react badly to it and you knew that too!"

"You could have." Katsuki hunches down. "I'm twice your age-

"I don't *care*. There. Established," Mina says flatly. "Now explain why you spent all this time *not contacting me* because you never make anything easy for yourself."

"I resent that," Katsuki mutters sullenly.

"Says the person who apparently managed to make friends with a Villain while joining the Hero Course," Mina deadpans.

"He wasn't a Villain when I met him four years ago," Katsuki says sourly. "And I don't agree with his reasons because they're fucking *stupid*. They went with all that trouble to kidnap me and they couldn't even give me a reasonable fucking plan-" She clicks her mouth shut, realising Mina was giving her a highly unimpressed look.

“That’s your complaint?” Mina leans forward and Katsuki senses danger. “Their lack of a *plan*.”

“... I didn’t really appreciate the kidnapping part either.”

“Oh you didn’t, did you?” Mina’s eyes gleams. “Because I didn’t really *appreciate* that part either. In fact, I spent an entire *week* terrified because only days earlier I found out that the one responsible is the same person who scarred up your chest and you didn’t even seem *remotely* concerned about that fact.”

Katsuki clenches her fists. “I know it looks bad from an outside point of view-“

“An *outside* point of view, is that what I am now?” Mina challenges and Katsuki opens her mouth. “Because I was under the impression that we are best friends but I watched you *hesitate* over a *Villain I’d never seen or heard about before* and you will *not* make excuses for that, you hear me Katsuki?”

“I will,” Katsuki snarls, something violent flaring sharp through her. “I owe Dabi *everything*. I wouldn’t even fucking *be here* if it wasn’t for him!”

Katsuki realises, slowly, that’s she’d shot to her feet, chest rising and falling, Mina’s mouth set in a tight thin line.

“Sit down.”

Katsuki hesitates.

“*Sit down.*”

Her legs folds and she drops grumpily onto the bed, averting her eyes away from the piercing golden gaze of the other.

“Explain,” Mina says shortly and Katsuki catches the tremble in her hand before she slides the other other on top of it and something thick and guilty curl in her chest.

“When I met Dabi four years ago I wasn’t... in a good place.” Katsuki licks her lips. “This body it... I couldn’t make sense of it being *me* because I kept looking into the mirror and expecting another face entirely. Dabi... understands that about me and he helped.”

“It isn’t no-“ Katsuki flinches and Mina quiets, her eyes searching.

"It helped?" she says after a long moment.

"Yes."

"... It got worse during the kidnapping," Mina points out, gaze unreadable. "I can see it at your collar – it didn't reach that high before."

Katsuki's lips draws back. "That's because of Shigaraki," she says flatly. "He thought it was a *good idea* to snap me out of my dissociation by turning my chest to—" She breathes out, dragging a hand through her hair. "I was bleeding out, I wouldn't have been in a good headspace if I'd woken up with Shigaraki all over me. Dabi just—he helped," she says firmly.

"So it's fine if it's *Dabi* all over you, hm?"

The sudden change of tune catches Katsuki off-guard and she feels her cheeks heat up as Mina sighs.

"Of course you have to care for him," she bemoans. "Please tell me you didn't spend a week *bonding*."

Katsuki refuses to look at her.

Mina, on the other hand, stares at her, face slowly turning aghast and then scandalized.

"You kissed him, didn't you?" Mina breathes out in revelation. "That's why you're - *Katsuki*."

"Shut up," Katsuki grumps, flushing deeper.

Quite unexpectedly Mina laughs, giggling as she rocked back on her chair. "Only you—" Mina gasps. "Only you would get yourself kidnapped and then *make-out with the Villain*."

"He wasn't a Villain four years ago," Katsuki hisses.

"Of course," Mina snorts. "And you are absolutely not planning on keeping any sort of contact with him now that he is, are you?"

Katsuki's shoulders draws tight.

Mina breathes out a sigh.

"I'm not... Katsuki, it's okay to *care*." She twitches. "There will come a

point where you'll have to stop and ask what you're ready to accept and what price you're willing to pay but I'm not going to tell you not to see him or anything like that," Mina huffs. "You're my friend and I want you safe and happy and you're stubborn enough that you're just going to end up doing your own thing anyway so I might as well support it." Mina gives her a horribly fond look that does something strange to her chest as Katsuki peers up. "Besides, you don't want him to stay a Villain, and not that girl Toga either. You want them *here* or you wouldn't have returned."

Katsuki hears the implication behind the words – that, if the situation had been reversed, if Katsuki had chosen to stay with the League, she might have made an attempt to draw Mina down with her.

It makes something ugly curl in her chest because the more she thinks about it-

"It's okay," Mina smiles at her, so unbearably *kind*. "But this still doesn't explain why you didn't come to me immediately, Katsuki." Mischief flashes through her golden eyes. "Unless you've secretly been sneaking Dabi into your-"

"I don't trust you."

Mina quiets, staring at her, and Katsuki stares back.

"I-" Katsuki draws a deep breath. "I *love you*," she forces herself not to choke on the words, keeping Mina's gaze, willing her to understand just how much she means it. "But I don't *trust you*. I don't understand you. You're too kind and I don't get that."

"... I'm not some kind of saint, Katsuki." Mina's brows draws together.

"I know. You're pushy, you know how to be mean and you can be pretty damn underhand when you want something to go your way. I'm not-" Katsuki falters, closing her eyes and breathing out. "The man who killed me," she says finally, opening her eyes. "Was my best friend of several years." Katsuki tips her head to meet Mina's gaze. "I trusted him. He was kind to me even when I did not deserve it, and ultimately he stuck a knife between my ribs and left me to choke and drown in my own blood."

Mina stares at her for a long moment.

"Stand up."

Slowly Katsuki does as told and Mina does as well, placing herself with her back towards the door.

“Look at me.” Reluctantly she drags her eyes up to meet the golden eyes of the younger girl. “You bloody *idiot*.”

Katsuki registers motion but before she can react arms wraps around her neck and they go down in a tangle of limbs and a rough thud of her back, her breath escaping with a startled wheeze and a smack of her head against the wooden floor.

She blinks up at the ceiling, pink hair tickling at her nose, a warm body sprawled out over hers, arms tightening painfully around her.

“You’re such an idiot,” Mina gasps against her neck as Katsuki worms her arms around her body, drawing her closer as she buried her face into Mina's hair, heart pounding inside her chest as she soaked in the presence of her friend. “A stupid, irresponsible, thick-headed *idiot*—”

Chapter End Notes

I think a lot of times, when it comes to friends, it can be easy even when it's complicated. Especially with Mina and Katsuki who are both pretty hard-headed and stubborn in their own ways.

Next chapter we get some more of the rest of Class 1-A I do believe. Paving all the pieces together slowly here but I don't want to rush things.

Thank you, as always, for all your wonderful comments - you make me so very warm and soft when sharing this with you guys <3

Don't hesitate to ask if there's anything you're curious about. I hang about tumblr as artsy-death if you're around there and this has been chapter 39 of In The End.

I hope you enjoyed!

Naked Truth

Chapter Notes

Square Face = Koda

Feather Head = Tokoyami

Ponytail = Yaoyorozu

Duct Tape = Sero

Sparky = Kaminari

Shitty Hair = Kirishima

Froggy = Asui

See Through = Hagakure

Punk = Jirou

Shiny = Aoyama

Sugar Rush = Sato

Lion Tail = Ojiro

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Mina drags Katsuki's pants up on her hips, securing them on with a belt before bending down to roll them up once to keep the ends from dragging.

"I'm not going anywhere," Katsuki points out. "You don't really need to keep my pants hostage."

Mina ignores her, admiring herself in the mirror as she smoothed her hands down her hips. "Maybe I should switch style," she muses. "This looks pretty badass." She gives herself a critical look. "I'm keeping these," she says decisively.

Katsuki huffs, swinging her legs over the edge of the bed and pressing down on bare feet to pad over to Mina's dresser. Ruffling through it she dismisses most of the jeans, skin tight as they happened to be, but she does find pair of lime green tights and a pair of black training shorts which she manages to wiggle into.

"Are you going to tell them?" Mina asks, throwing an orange t-shirt with blue splatters to her over her shoulder.

Katsuki gives it a dubious look, wondering if it was some sort of strange punishment for her avoidance, but ultimately decides that she doesn't particularly *care* and pulls it on. "Why should I?" she wonders, tugging at the loose fabric.

Where the hell had even Mina even gotten the thing?

More importantly, would Mina miss it if she was to keep it for herself? It was downright *obnoxious*.

“Because they’re our classmates?” Mina turns to look at her, pausing and then snorting out a laugh. “You look ridiculous,” Mina tells her, eyes crinkling before settling into something more serious. “Don’t you think Midoriya deserves to know at least?” she presses.

Katsuki’s under the opinion that she doesn’t particularly owe Deku – *Midoriya* – she supposes in all fairness, and then switches it to *Mini Might* because the name makes her skin crawl, *anything*. He had known the boy when he was eight and still alive, his hang-up wasn’t particularly healthy and Katsuki had done nothing to encourage it.

She’d *discouraged* it, hadn’t she? Katsuki is fairly fucking certain and yet he wouldn’t leave her alone.

“He was genuinely regretful, you know?”

“When did you even find the time to talk to him?” Katsuki asks sourly.

“He was at the police station along with me,” Mina admits. “He was planning on launching a rescue mission on his own.”

Katsuki twists around to look at her and Mina grimaces.

“Yeah, bad,” she agrees at Katsuki’s look. “I told him my point of view and he shared his. I think... the guy’s been lonely, you know? It doesn’t really excuse what happened and he took responsibility for the whole All Might... mishap. I spoke to Aizawa-sensei and Aizawa-sensei spoke to him but I doubt he’s going to let go of this idea of you anytime soon.”

“Brilliant,” Katsuki growls. “Just the kind of thing I want to deal with.”

“Is it really that bad to let him know that Bakugou Katsuki actually died?” Mina wonders. “Or – however you want to define it, seeing as you have his memories.” She waves her hand. “He’s not a bad person and I think you know that too.”

Katsuki *does* know that. The kid is idealistic, naïve, his idolisation is sure to get him into a shit load of trouble and he’d hung his dreams on a dead boy but it doesn’t make him *bad*. Just... young. Mini Might had

no way of knowing that his friend is dead and Katsuki can't tell what might have become of the two of them if the boy hadn't had the misfortune to crack his head open like an egg.

Bitter rivals? The best of friends? Hell if she knew. Point was that it wouldn't happen, there was no resolution to be sought in her.

"I'm not supposed to tell," Katsuki tries.

Mina gives her an unimpressed look. "Since when has that ever stopped you?"

Reluctantly her mouth twists up in brief amusement. "Fair," she agrees.

"So?" Mina presses.

Katsuki rolls her eyes. "Fine," she says shortly.

"You should tell Uraraka and Iida as well," Mina says with an innocent smile. "You know, so he has someone to talk to it about."

"Should I now," Katsuki says drily. "I suppose I should just tell the heap of them. You know, really drive the message home and give him all the *support* he needs."

"Now that you mention it..."

"Mina, no."

"Mina, yes!" Her friend laughs at her look. "They *like* you Katsuki. You can't escape our friendship."

"Watch me," Katsuki says flatly, taking a step forward and then chokes as her shirt is snagged with a tug back.

-

Mina swings her arm around her shoulder, keeping her in place as Katsuki gives the gathering of her former classmates a flat, definitely not pouty, look.

The attention on her makes her want to twist around and march right out of there – but there's also Mina's body pressing against hers, the reassurance of *I am here, I am not leaving*.

Katsuki doesn't deserve it but it's there all the same and perhaps that's

why she remains rooted in place.

“Katsuki has something to tell you all!” Mina says brightly, completely ignoring the fact that they had, quite fantastically, interrupted the ongoing breakfast. There’s bacon and eggs filling mouths, piping hot tea steaming from its pots, and some seventeen eyes focused on them.

Katsuki has the tact of a prickly cactus in a house of balloons but she’s very aware of the fact that Mini Might is *right there*, eyes lowered to his lap after she happened to glance to him.

Not that she particularly *cares* but Katsuki tries to be fair, occasionally, and she only has bad feelings about this entire thing.

But she’s also aware of the fact that there’s no fucking good way to break this and she scowls out at nothing.

“That’s- okay?” Shitty Hair sounds confused but Katsuki feels the eyes of those who knows and finds herself wondering how much money it would take to get herself a fake identity and just go underground.

She still has Endeavour’s card – for some fucking reason – and she’s decently sure the man just hadn’t *bothered* to put a limit to it. Or if there was one, it was measured under an *I am too rich to care* limit which was honestly *fucked-up*.

All Might was notorious for giving away his money to charity, Endeavour had just never bothered.

Which... was an idea, Katsuki supposes, eyebrow creasing before she huffed out a breath and focused on the situation at hand with some exasperation after a poke at her side from the resident pink skinned Hero-to-be.

“I am not supposed to fucking tell,” she says flatly. “So if you can’t keep a secret, leave.” Mina elbows her. “*Please.*”

She gives Mina a *better?* look and Mina gives her a thumbs-up.

There’s not a single person moving and Katsuki looks to the ceiling, closing her eyes briefly.

She doesn’t even know the names of most of her classmates – nicknames, *deaf names*, sure, because Shinsou and Mina had spent almost a week debating the merits of different signs with some poking and prodding at Katsuki for the proper way to do them.

But some she had just forgotten – like Square Face, the blocky tall person with a duck beak for a Hero costume, or the obnoxiously shiny blond at the middle of the table.

She does not tell Mina this. She strongly suspects her friend wouldn't approve and she figures she can just bug Shouto about it once he stops by. She might as well keep tracks of those who *know* and those who *don't*.

She opens her eyes, finding Round Cheeks's eyes and flicking her gaze quite deliberately to Mini Might.

It gets her a small crease of her brows and a hand sliding down to grasp at the nervous fingers beside her.

"I died a twenty-two-year-old deaf woman in another world," Katsuki says slowly. "Roughly eight years ago I woke up in this body because the original owner fell off a bridge and he didn't survive it."

There is a noise, something horrible and high-pitch that makes her stomach twist on itself because *fuck all of this*.

Katsuki is tired of feeling responsible for things because of her fucking *existence*.

And yet here she is – causing pain for *living*. It's nothing short of ugly and she hates it on a visceral level.

"That's- that can't be right," Mini Might trembles, Round Cheek's fingers white knuckled around his, Class Rep reaching out to put a hand on his shoulder with a glint of his glasses and a shadowed look in his eyes. "Kacchan-"

"Is dead," she says heavily, regretting this entire business already, but Mina presses closer beside her and she soldiers on. "It wasn't your fault," she tells him roughly. "I have the memories of your Kacchan and I remember – it wasn't your fault."

"If I hadn't-"

"No," Katsuki says firmly. "It was a fucking accident. He was stu-" She shuts her mouth, hissing out a breath. "He misjudged," she says shortly. "It was his own judgement and ideas that made him take a step back. It might even have been me – we were already bleeding together at that point, I suspect, and I've never liked-" Her teeth clenches. "I don't like being touched," she forces out.

Mina squeezes her closer and Katsuki amends it to *mostly*. Because it had been a long fucking road to get to the point where they're at.

Mina had made things easier with Dabi and Dabi had made things easier with Mina.

Katsuki tries to not think too hard about it.

There's a scrape of a chair and she slants her eyes to the green haired boy as he rises up, palms pressed flat against the table, their eyes meeting.

An eternity seems to pass and for a brief moment there's something she recognises far too well in those eyes before it drowns out into agony.

"You-" Mini Might chokes on the word. "I need- I'm sorry!" He takes a hard step back, Round Cheeks and Class Rep both reaching out to stop him, but there's red zipping over his skin and the next second the door is slamming open and Katsuki absently notes that he'd gotten a whole lot fucking faster.

Round Cheeks round towards her, mouth opening and then clicking shut just as fast with a look to Mina who Katsuki realizes had tensed up.

She glances to the pink girl beside her and finds Mina with a tight line of her lips and a warning look in her eyes.

Round Cheeks breathes out. "I suppose we should go find him."

"All Might knows, as does Aizawa," Katsuki tells her.

Round Cheeks gives her a searching look and then nods shortly.

"Thank you for telling us," Class Rep says with a small stiff bow. "I apologize for-"

"He's your friend," Katsuki says with a huff. "Just go." They do and Katsuki refocuses on the rest of the table, leaning more against Mina as exhaustion crawls through her. "We didn't have Heroes or Villains or quirks or that sort of thing. No powers that I know of, though there must have been *something* since I'm *here*. But, yeah. I'm thirty, not sixteen, and I'm not a boy, I'm a woman so – adjust, I guess."

"How did you die?" Katsuki twitches, turning her head to look at

Sparky. "I mean – twenty-two, that's pretty young," he ventures a bit hesitantly. "Were you sick or something or-" Punk smacks the back of his head to a yelp.

"You don't just ask someone how they *died*," she hisses.

"I was murdered," Katsuki admits and Sparky's mouth snaps shut. "Stabbed, as it were."

Sparky looks at her, wide-eyed and slowly sinking back in his seat. "Oh," he says weakly.

Shitty Hair gives a low whistle. "That's messed-up."

"Yeah," Katsuki snorts. "You could say that."

"Is that why you're not coming back?" Shitty Hair wonders. "Because of the whole age thing? Because you still, you know, look sixteen and you haven't actually been in this world for that long so..."

"Ah." Katsuki grimaces. "No. That's a whole other thing between me and Endeavour."

"Well!" Shitty Hair slams his fist into the palm of his hand. "You're still our classmate, Baku- I mean, Touya!" He pauses. "Touya-senpai?" He ventures thoughtfully as Katsuki gives him a mildly horrified look.

Beside her Mina has a smirk creeping across her face. "*Touya-nee*," she suggests.

"Let's *not*," Katsuki begs with a grimace as Shitty Hair slowly grinned.

"I don't know, it has quite the ring to it," Mina muses. "You could be like our official class mascot."

"I will hurt you," Katsuki promises with a hiss.

"Even if you're not officially part of our class you're still one of *us* so you better come visit us often, you hear!" A gloved finger levels threateningly at her and Katsuki gives See Through a flat look.

"There's nowhere you can be that isn't where you're meant to be," Feather Head murmurs from his seat, rising a cup of steaming tea to his beak to take a weirdly elegant sip.

Katsuki tries not to think too hard about the peculiars of certain quirks. There are days when her quirk horrifies her, there are days

when she's so very relieved she'd at least remained visible and human-looking.

She did bad enough with her existential crisis without having a fucking *bird head*.

-

There is a fair few questions but ultimately the news of her existence, with the exception of Mini Might, is taken with the kind of chill that could only be because this world was just one fucked-up thing pilfered upon another.

Katsuki strongly suspects the fine points of the horror of what she is might just go over the head of the kids who seemed more interested in the fact that she grew up in a world without Heroes and Villains.

If Katsuki was in the mood for it she might have debated the pros and cons of it but she didn't fancy bothering with an explanation.

Instead she'd sprawled back with her head in Mina's lap on a couch, ignoring the lot of them.

Or at least trying.

"We need to add you to our chat group," Ponytail muses opposite them. She, along with See Through, Punk and Froggy had ended up gravitating together and Katsuki isn't blind to the implications. "We have one for the girls of class 1-A."

Katsuki slants her a look.

"You can be like our own personal mentor!" See Through sounds entirely too enthusiastic about it. "I mean, Midnight-sensei is cool and all but she's our *teacher*. You're just – you."

"Thanks," Katsuki says drily.

"I'm serious!" See Through insists. "You know what it's like being a woman and- you already helped, didn't you? You gave Yaomomo advice after the internship and you were the first one to remark on the fact that I didn't have a Hero suit of my own." She can't see the girl's face but Katsuki has a strong feeling she's grinning. "You were so *uncomfortable*."

"It's messed up," Katsuki grumbles.

See Through's hands curls around the edges of the couch as she leant forward. "They actually figured out how to make me a suit," she confides. "They cut off all my hair but – it'll grow out, you know? And they'll make my suit out of it. Apparently they took the idea from someone who could phase through walls and needed his costume special made to keep him from losing all his clothes!"

That's... actually relieving to hear, Katsuki decides, humming in acknowledgement.

Honestly – sending a teenage girl out in the *nude*. U.A. should never have allowed it – the suit should have been made a priority from the get-go and the teachers should have talked to her about it to make sure she wasn't uncomfortable considering their class were mostly made up of teenage boys.

And hadn't Shouto like – iced over the entire thing during their first Hero training thing? See Through could have ripped the skin off her feet.

A hand dips into her pocket and Katsuki twitches but allows Mina to fish up her phone, her hand grasped and thumb pressed down to unlock it to a dry look.

"You have, like, five numbers in this thing," Mina says disapprovingly. "Katsuki–"

She grumbles in response, dragging an arm over her eyes.

Mina pinches her arm but she hears the low *click-click-click* of her fingers flying over the screen and decides that she'll likely have the numbers of the entire class added up in a matter of minutes.

"Touya-chan, I hope you don't mind me being blunt," Froggy says across the couch. "But why is it that you never call anyone by name?"

Katsuki opens her mouth to say something sarcastic but Mina flicks her nose and she lifts her arm to give her tired look to a raised brow.

"I told you I was deaf," she says instead. "In deaf culture you can give names based on characteristics. It's habit, I guess." It's probably more convoluted than that, her dislike for addressing people by names, sticking to nicknames and Hero names, but all the same. It's a good excuse as any.

"So Froggy–"

Katsuki raises her hands, making an A and then curled her hand by her chin, flicking out her index and middle-finger. "A for Asui," she explains. "And then frog."

"So you *do* know our actual names," See Through muses. "Oh! Do me! Do me!"

Katsuki folds into a T-

"T for Tooru," See Through says, hand rising to copy and Katsuki pauses, allowing her to adjust for it. "And then--"

Katsuki holds out her index finger and then drags her other palm down over it and See Through copies her carefully.

Without the index finger the sign was basically *to overlook*. Which worked just as fine, Katsuki supposed, but she liked the fine point of it.

"Invisible?" See Through guesses as she does it again, managing a rather perfect copy.

"Yeah," Katsuki agrees. "It's only my own use of it," she says lowering her hands. "It's normally someone else who gives you your deaf name, not something you chose for yourself. But it's – you can have someone pick something else," she grumbles.

"I like it, *kero*," Froggy says with a smile and a tilt of her head. "It's cute!"

"Mine is awesome!" Mina drops Katsuki's phone on her chest quite abruptly. "Look!" She goes through the sign for *pink* and *outer space person* confidently as Katsuki shoves her phone back into her pocket. "Pink Alien!" she sounds smug about it as well.

"What about me?" Ponytail leans forward, eyes bright with curiosity.

-

Katsuki wakes with a start and it takes her a fair few seconds to realize that, yes, that was indeed her name being called, *loudly*, and secondly Mina was looking entirely too amused to have been used as a napping spot as Katsuki dragged herself up to stare blankly at the blond making a beeline towards her.

Present Mic had an armful of electronics being carefully held, cords

dangling down by his knees, and Katsuki makes out both a laptop and a webcam amidst the mess.

It's still a bit off, associating *Touya* to her, but Endeavour was slowly getting her used to it, whether he knew it or not.

He drops the electronics quite unceremoniously onto the table and then he leans down towards her and she balks at the intensity of his eyes as he peers at her over the orange sunglasses he favoured, revealing clever eyes with constrictive circles around the pupils.

"You look good," he tells her, head tilting. "Well, better than I expected," he amends, hand at his hip. "I hear there's been a lot going on and we have a lot to catch-up on!"

We have? Katsuki wonders, blinking at him.

"Shouta said to give you time and I *have* and then I heard you were here so I came." He straightens up, gesturing towards the heap of cords and electronics that Froggy had leant forward to consider curiously with her index finger pressed to her lips. "It took me some time but I've managed to gather together everything you need to continue your JSL lessons off-campus!"

Katsuki stills.

"I know you were eager to learn and just because you're not officially a student here anymore it does not mean you're exempted from learning. We'll figure out the details later – do you have your phone? Thank you." He says, accepting the phone she hands him a bit numbly and sliding it open. "I had a talk with Nedzu and we're officially adding JSL as an extra credit thing so you're essentially my trial run to make sure the lessons are well tailored. I'll be expecting feedback on what you've already worked through–"

"Can I sign up?" Shouto asks and Mic pauses, turning towards him as he approaches. "I'd like to learn," he says simply with a brief glance towards Katsuki.

"Of course, Todoroki-kun!" Present Mic looks delighted. "Any and all who want to learn JSL is welcome to!"

"Then – me too!" Mina exclaims, clapping her hands together, eyes lightening up. "Shinsou and I have been doing some studying on our own but it's really hard to figure out some of the signs–"

Katsuki filters their voices into background noise, giving herself a shake as she looked up at the sound of familiar footsteps.

“Yo, Katsuki,” Shinsou greets, slouched over with his hands in his pockets. “I see you finally made your way around.”

“Where have you been?” she wonders, brow creasing. “I thought you moved into the dorms as well.”

“I did,” Shinsou gives her a thoughtful look, the shadows beneath her eyes smudged almost purple. “But I have dinner at home once a week.”

Home. Shinsou had just started to settle in with the trio and Katsuki supposes it isn’t so strange that he’d wanted to keep it. His foster parents had been assholes and Aizawa had basically taken him under his guardianship.

“Did you-?” Shinsou tilts his head meaningfully towards the gathering of classmates still hanging around.

Mini Might is still missing and a fair few had ambled off but Punk, Sparky, Shitty Hair and Duct Tape had all peered up from what looked like a rather intense game of cards on the floor and Lion Tail and Feather Head are listening to something, earbuds shared between them in the plushy bean chairs.

Sugar Rush is making something sweet in the kitchen, by the scent of it, Square Face hovering near and Shiny gesturing dramatically over a book, flour smeared across his cheek.

Something ugly curls inside of her at the knowledge that she wouldn’t be staying here. That at the end of the day she’d be making her way back to Endeavour because she’s no longer part of this. Isn’t part of anything, really.

“They know,” she admits.

“Ah,” Shinsou hums. “That’s good then?” he asks, eyebrow rising up.

“s whatever.”

“Midnight is waiting outside – apparently Nedzu wants to meet you. She’ll take you,” Shinsou informs her, dropping down on the couch as she dragged herself up with a grumble. “Nice ensemble. The neon green tights really brings out your eyes.” He smirks.

“Fuck off,” Katsuki grumbles. “I’ll be back,” she tells Mina when she feels her gaze upon her. “My bag is still in your room.”

“Don’t get into too much trouble,” Mina grins at her.

Katsuki waves a hand over her shoulder, sneakers threading quietly across the floor as she made her way to the door.

Chapter End Notes

Oof, that is a lot of nicknames, but kinda unavoidable. I try, or well Katsuki tries, to keep them fairly obvious so I hope it helps when keeping track of them.

I will, likely, get back to class 1-A without Katsuki just to broaden the situation at work because Katsuki... is Katsuki. She's a flawed narrator which is why I find her interesting in the situation she's in.

And there will, naturally, be a shift in dynamic when age comes into the factor of things. Which means we're not nearly done with this whole thing.

Because they're all individuals at the end of the day with their own perspective and reactions.

And I get to things eventually. Even All Might, I promise.

Your comments are a blessing and I am ever so happy to write and share this with you guys. This chapter was being a bit of a bugger but I managed to pin it down to what I wanted it to be.

I hang about tumblr as artsy-death and this has been chapter 40 of In The End.

I hope you enjoyed!

The Situation

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Katsuki shoves her hands into her pockets, doing her best to ignore the contemplative eyes of the woman beside her as she trailed her way towards the entrance to U.A.

There's a click-clack of heels beside the silent steps of her sneakers and there's a juxtaposition between them that is hard to deny. They're both thirty, they're both women, and yet they couldn't be more different if they tried.

Midnight is tall, her hair long and make-up expertly applied. Her entire brand is centered around her femininity and a turn around on the exploitive sexualisation of female Heroes that she'd made her own, using it in a way that was clever and admirable.

Katsuki in comparison is all hard muscles and short hair, male at first glance and not particularly caring. She likes who she is, has no interest in changing her style, and with her once again wearing the right pronouns it's hard to care about the rest.

Midnight halts outside the entrance, presses her card to it, and Katsuki absently turns her eyes heavenwards as the other enters the code with a confirming beep before the door clicked open.

"What does Nedzu want anyway?" Katsuki asks as she slinks inside at the other's heels before sidling up beside her as they made their way down the hallway.

"It's better if I allow him to explain in person," Midnight says cryptically. "What I can tell you is that, as of five days ago, Recovery Girl was made your personal medical contact which means you're going to have to suffer through a full check-up once Nedzu is done with you. It-" Midnight plows through when Katsuki opens her mouth "- has already been cleared with Endeavour and he knows to expect you home late tonight."

Katsuki's mouth clicks shut and she grunts in acknowledgement.

"I know it must be getting tiresome, lacking the ability to make your own choices," Midnight says with a sympathetic smile. "I certainly

wouldn't appreciate being bounced around the way you are but I think you'll find the meeting... enlightening."

Because that isn't fucking ominous, Katsuki thinks with some resignation, quite sure she's not going to enjoy it all.

-

The first sign that she's in way over her head is the fact that there's more than one person inside the room and she allows Midnight to give her a nudge from where she'd paused, reluctantly stepping inside.

There's the infamous principal which immediately draws her eyes because if there's a person who might understand what it's like being an outsider in the world it's no-doubt the animal seated on the desk with a small cup of tea cradled between his tiny paws.

Katsuki had read about him long before U.A. and there were a lot of rumours and speculations surrounding him.

An animal with a quirk that granted him above human intelligence. He had made splashes in the high-courts for the rights of him and others like him and now he was the principal of the most famous Hero School in Japan.

Not quite a mouse, not quite a bear, not quite a dog - maybe he was all, maybe none at all. Considering what Noumus are he could have been part of the experiments leading up to that for all that Katsuki knew.

Dangerous, Katsuki thinks as she meets beady black eyes, fur white and pristine, a scar stretching over his face and clad in a sharp black suit paired with yellow laze-up sneakers.

The Detective is there as well and Katsuki's mouth curls at the sight of him before turning her attention to the last two in the room.

Dressed in far too much jeans to be even remotely fashionable Best Jeanist turns away from his conversation partner at the click of the door.

Katsuki is struck by the memory of him sprawled out in the dirt with his chest a bloody mess and deduces it must have been before her mind clocked out in the dissociation.

"You look better," Katsuki grunts, slipping her hands into her pockets.

“As do you,” Best Jeanist says with a tick up of his mouth as he takes a step towards her, all gangly limbs and flourish as he folds one arm over his chest, one hand habitually smoothing down his fringe. “I was quite relieved to hear you made it out alright.”

Katsuki gives him a searching look but he seems nothing short of *sincere* and she huffs quietly.

“So this is the infamous Touya Katsuki,” the stranger comments and Katsuki switches her gaze to him, eyes narrowing.

Sir Nighteye – sharp, clever, former associate and vocal fan of All Might.

Not someone I want anything to do with.

“Sir Nighteye” she says warily and his eyes glints behind golden frames. *Weirdo.*

“Indeed,” he agrees. “I’ve been hearing all sorts of curious things about you.”

Katsuki only just resists the urge to bare her teeth at him, turning instead to Nedzu who looks relaxed where he sits.

“Tea?” he offers her, tiny paw pressing a cup forward beside him.

Katsuki takes a slow step forward, taking the cup and then dropping down in the waiting chair in front of his desk as Midnight stepped up beside the Detective.

Pro-Heroes, a Detective, and then her.

How grand, Katsuki thinks as she slouches deeper into her seat.

“Before this meeting begins,” Nedzu says as Katsuki takes a grudging sip. “I would like to extend my sincerest regrets for what happened to you. As the principal of this school I am in charge of keeping you safe but this is not the first time I find myself in a position of having failed you.”

It’s a surprisingly good tea and Katsuki finds herself taking another sip, watching him over the steaming liquid.

“That said, new revelations and happenings have put the Hero Society at large in a precarious situation.” Nedzu presses his paws together.

“Without All Might it falls on Endeavour to step up and fill the role of the Number One Hero,” Sir Nighteye speaks up, his shoulders straight and tense. “But he’s not...”

“All Might,” Katsuki says flatly because she’s she’d seen the pictures of his office posted online in groups made of Hero fanatics.

If there was ever anyone to match Mini Might’s idolisation it’s Sir Nighteye.

“As you say.” The man studies her before turning to Nedzu. “I am still not convinced this is the right way to go about this. You claim she’s thirty but by all appearance she’s just a child – we do not know how things factor in and we know nothing about who she was in this *other world* she claims to be from.”

“According to my quirk she spoke the truth during interrogation,” the Detective speaks up mildly, hat grasped in his hands. “And we did ask if she had a criminal record.”

“And what about now?” Sir Nighteye presses. “She’s knowingly associated with not one but *two* Villains and she spent an entire week with the League of Villains-“

“Because she was kidnapped,” Best Jeanist steps in with a gesture of his hand. “You cannot hold her responsible for that-“

“It is a sensitive situation,” Nedzu speaks up, silencing them. “But the matter remains that she’s the one closest to the situation at hand as per the decision of the man himself.”

Katsuki takes another sip of her tea, flicking a glance to Midnight who is quiet, dark blue eyes hard to read.

“Either you trust me or you don’t,” Katsuki speaks up when Nighteye opens his mouth. “I don’t care either way but I have better things to do than listening to you arguing.” She turns her gaze back to Nedzu. “So fucking get on with it or I’m leaving.”

A tense sort of air fills the room as Katsuki stares into the dark beady eyes of the Principal.

“Touya-san.” The Detective steps forward, placing himself near the desk and within her direct view. “How would you describe the state of the Hero Society following All Might stepping down?”

Katsuki scrunches up her nose.

“s fucking messy, isn’t it?” she says after a brief moment, giving him a searching look. “He took on too much and didn’t make contingency plans for it – at least none that fits into the *now*. Endeavour is left to fill a spot he can’t, not as he is now at least,” she says sourly. “All For One was smarter, he started training Shigaraki earlier than-“ Katsuki snaps her mouth shut.

“Everyone in this room is aware of Midoriya Izuku’s status,” the Principal says after a brief moment. “But I didn’t know you were.”

“I hazarded a guess,” Katsuki says with a grimace. “The favouritism is fucking obvious, isn’t it? And the boy very distinctly remembers him being quirkless.”

“Noted,” Nedzu inclines his head. “I do not need to caution you to keep this to yourself, I suspect.”

“I haven’t told anyone,” Katsuki says flatly and makes no move to acknowledge the way the Detective discreetly signs his agreement to it. “And I’m not fucking planning to. I might not like him but he’s a fucking *kid*.”

“You agree he’s too young then?” Nighteye speaks up, straightening, and – *huh*, there’s history there. Had Nighteye disagreed with All Might choice? Anyone with some *sense* would have. She’s under the distinct impression that All Might had given zero fucks about anything but his own desperate ideas of Heroism when picking Mini Might.

Whatever those were. Who looked at a fucking kid and decided; *ah, this is the one to rest the future of the world upon*.

Someone either very naïve or very cruel.

Katsuki rolls her shoulders back. “He’s *sixteen*. All Might should have made his choice earlier and he should have picked someone older and more keenly aware of just what’s being asked of him. Whether he likes it or not he’s going to be in way over his head at the end of this.” She grimaces. “He’s fucking obsessed with All Might – the man could ask him to jump off a fucking cliff and he’d do it. There’s so much wrong with this entire shitty situation.”

She also happens to find the whole *Symbol of Peace* business far overrated. It’s dangerous to shoulder a single person with something like the well-being of society and All Might hadn’t managed to do a

good enough job of it anyway.

On the surface it had been a golden age, but he had left behind himself a warped idea of idolisation and those in poor areas and those born with the wrong sort of quirks were the ones left suffering in the aftermath in it.

Not to mention situations like what happened in the Todoroki household – abuse swept under the rug to keep up a perfect picture of Heroism. What would it mean for Endeavour to have the ugly truth exposed?

At the state the world was in it could very well mean the end of the Hero Society as it was known.

There's no such thing as a perfect society – there will always be those falling through the cracks, Katsuki's well aware of it, but there's danger in putting it in a system with the rise and fall of a single person.

And it's dangerous to put the well-being of people on the shoulders of those desiring fame.

Mini Might could very well grow into a good Hero but with the mentality he had now? That desperate need to save everyone, no matter the cost, it would burn him out sooner rather than later. He'd all but ruined his arms in the forest, she'd seen the way they hung limp and crushed, and All Might should have stepped in long ago to caution him away from such mentality.

But during their first match of the year All Might had allowed her to beat the kid to the ground until he couldn't get up because he wanted to give Mini Might a *chance*. To, what, prove himself? Katsuki had found the situation ugly then and she found it even uglier now.

The world's Number One Hero. *Hah*.

The ranking system would really be better off razed the ground, as far as Katsuki's fucking concerned. So much she agrees on with Dabi and the rest of the League, she supposes.

Nighteye's eyes are a peculiar shade of yellow and she flashes her teeth at him. "But then again, maybe it would have been better to just let his quirk die along with him," she says, just to see them narrow, dark and complicated.

“He’s not dead,” Nighteye says and there’s a peculiar note to his voice that makes her eyes narrow.

Future vision. That was his quirk wasn’t it? Not a lot of information on *how* it worked but-

Katsuki shoves the thought down before it can latch on, not interested in getting involved.

“So you’re, what? Fucking concerned Endeavour might not do his work properly?” she says instead, focusing back on Nedzu. “And because I’m going to be working with him you want me to, what, *spy on him*? Because I have far more integrity than that and if that’s what you want from me you better think again.”

“Haven’t you wondered why we’ve been interested in keeping your age under wraps?” Nedzu asks and she furrows her brows at him.

“Mildly,” she admits grudgingly. “But I get not wanting it spread that your child might be parasitically taken over by some other worldly creature,” she says with a flash of her teeth, eyes dark with self-depreciating amusement.

“By working directly under Endeavour you’re going to be sought out, whether you want it or not,” Best Jeanist speaks up and she tightens her fingers around her cup. “They’re going to look at you, by all appearance sixteen-years-old, and they’re going to think they can use you to get to Endeavour.” He smooths a hand down his fringe. “The League of Villains expressed interest in you early and your... somewhat antagonistic approach to people means that those with less savoury interests will seek you out in an attempt to use you.”

“Brilliant,” Katsuki says sourly. “And *you* want to use that.”

Was that why Endeavour had picked her as well? Her situation did lend to a particular sort of use, she supposes, but it didn’t strike her as something Endeavour would bother with. He was too wrapped up in his ego to think anyone below him would stand in his way.

“Indeed,” Nighteye agrees. “You are going to be approached no matter what but there’s a matter of how you chose to deal with it and it benefits you to work with us.” The *obviously* is all but spelled out. “The world cannot afford to lose Endeavour as it stands now. It would mean an uproar.”

Katsuki’s under the conviction that Endeavour will get what’s coming

to him, one way or the other, and likely by no fault but his own. Whether it's by Dabi or even Shouto's hand, at this point, or someone else entirely is a debate, of course.

But they want to keep Endeavour in the position as the Number One Hero for as long as possible to solve the situation left behind by All Might.

How much will you be able to overlook to keep it so? Katsuki wonders, staring at the principal.

Katsuki isn't overly invested in keeping Endeavour in the spot he's in but she's rather against the whole project of *starting a war* that the League had going for them as well. There is just something about the idea of a *quirk war* that makes something cold spread through her.

If there's such a thing as *lesser evil* she doesn't really know because it's all shitty regrets and someone suffering no matter what. She'd rather not be involved either way but that's not... a thing, apparently.

She's is stuck under Endeavour – that's not something she has a choice on, legally, at least. And it says something about the state of the Hero world that they would come to her like this, though she supposes there's some morality in it with her having the age to back it up and not actually being sixteen.

She can hope they'd actually factored that into the decision, considering Nighteye's earlier comment, and she knows it's a risk for them as well.

Knowingly associated with not one but two Villains. Yeah, that's a risk. A big fucking one. It does lend some credit to Endeavour on her behalf. Just how much of the situation had he managed to shuffle under the rug to put her beneath him without punishment for her decisions?

A... complicated thought. Ultimately she owes him nothing but it's still an interesting thing to consider.

It does put into question how fucked-up the Hero business truly is to allow it. There had been some high-ranking names involved in getting her out, a fair share of them had to know about her association with Villains, and yet there were to public outcry? Like? Katsuki appreciates it, she'd rather not be in jail, but fucking *still*.

She drags a hand down over her face.

Ultimately she doesn't want a war. She'd *seen* how much it fucked up her mother, how distant and worn it had left her, and she'd seen the reality of it on the news and in history books.

She doesn't want it.

Katsuki is... a selfish person.

These Heroes want to use her? Fine, then.

Fine.

Katsuki can do that.

She might not like it but she can fucking do it.

Let them know who's interested in fucking with Endeavour by using her and, possibly, downplay and interfere in anything that might lead to Endeavour risking his spot as the Number One Hero sooner rather than later.

Katsuki can read between the lines just fine, thank you very fucking much.

But they need *her* and they should have been far more fucking careful in tipping this in her favour.

-

Best Jeanist asks her to stay behind after the meeting and Katsuki shoves her hands into her pockets and tries not to look like she'd rather throw herself out the window as she meets his eyes.

"That was a lot to take in, huh?" he muses quietly, regarding her.
"How do you feel about it?"

"Does it matter?" Katsuki snorts, leaning back against Nedzu's desk.
"It was made quite clear that no-one else can do it."

"You do have a habit of getting yourself into complicated situations."

Katsuki's first impression of Best Jeanist hadn't been the best but he'd *tried* in a way that none had before him. Not a stranger, at least, someone who didn't *have to*. And he'd tried to make right by her which had been... new.

It twists strangely in her chest.

“I’m seriously contemplating becoming a hermit at the end of this,” Katsuki says sourly. “Tasked with protecting the new Number One Hero himself. That’s a responsibility I sure want on my shoulders.”

The world already blames her for the decline of the first one – she might just start a collection at this point.

It had been... uncomfortable... to see how much her name appeared in online forums.

Because it had to be the sixteen-year-old kid to blame. Without her All Might was sure to be *thriving*.

Sound logic at work, really.

That if anything meant that she was perfectly fine not having her actual age out an about. She can just picture the torches if she's crowned a child murderer and a body-snatcher on top of it.

She wouldn't live to see the sunrise.

“I spoke with Endeavour,” Best Jeanist tells her. “He has agreed to allow me to take over your training twice a week.”

That... is news to her.

“He’s a busy man,” Best Jeanist says as if reading her mind. “And I thought you could benefit from some time with someone you’re familiar with.”

Katsuki can't say it's not welcome – it's liberating to go up against Endeavour but having her sweat wrenched out of her on a daily basis has made her near paranoid on keeping a water bottle on hand at all times. One secured to her bike, two more in her backpack, at least four hidden inside her room and more in the gardens.

“Are your offices even close?”

“Not in the least. I hope you enjoy doing a bit of travelling.” Best Jeanist offers her with a somewhat wry smile.

Katsuki furrows her brow. “So when you say two days you mean-“

“You’ll head over to me Wednesday afternoon,” Best Jeanist informs her. “And travel home Saturday morning.”

“Endeavour actually agreed to that?” She raises a brow at him.

“It took some convincing,” Best Jeanist admits. “And it’s just until you get your provisional Hero licence in a month but it’s the best I could do.”

“I thought it was in two weeks?” Katsuki scratches at her neck and then pauses, lowering it, mildly disturbed.

“It was moved to accommodate all the schools signing up for it.” Best Jeanist leans back against the wall. “The recent business with the rise of the League of Villains and student actually getting kidnapped from the most famed school in all of Japan – well, no good principal want to leave their students without a way to defend themselves. So prepare to face down an influx of first years.”

That’s... huh.

“Do you still have my number?”

“New phone,” Katsuki admits, stuffing her hand down her pocket for it and forking it over after unlocking it.

-

“Your bloodwork is fine but you’re dehydrated,” Recovery Girl informs her, sounding none-too-impressed. “Have you been using any of the salves prescribed for your scar?”

Fingers prods at her chest and Katsuki twitches uncomfortably but she grudgingly remains still.

“Yeah,” she grunts. “But it’s not going to do much, is it?”

“It is extensive enough that your movement will be limited for the rest of your life,” Recovery Girl admits. “But with salves and stretches you’ll be able to ease the strain. But your sense of touch is pretty much gone – he’s got a peculiar quirk, that Shigaraki-boy. It was quick thinking on that other one’s part to burn it, though risky. It saved you from bleeding out.”

Burns carried a high-risk of infections and despite that she’d never once had an issue with it. There had been studies made on the healing of nitroglycerin and considering she fucking *sweated it* there was likely something wired into her genetic make-up that worked in her favour there.

“I’m going to prescribe you electrolytes to take with your water,”

Recovery Girl informs her. “I take it your dehydration is from training with Endeavour?”

“He enjoys making me sweat,” Katsuki grumbles.

“Your scar means you don’t sweat from your chest anymore since there are no sweat glands left.” Recovery Girl snaps a pair of gloves on and Katsuki eyes them. “It means there’s an increased risk of overheating which you have to be aware of.”

“I can close and open up my sweat glands at will.” Katsuki blinks as light was shone into her eyes, following the finger with some boredom because *this* she’d done a million times before. “I could just excessively sweat from my back if I need to.”

“Considering how your quirk works it might mean you naturally sweat less to preserve for it.” The light is clicked-off. “We’ll have to do some follow-up on it. Normally you’d spend three years here at U.A. figuring things out but you’re just going to have to do a crash course into the workings of your quirk.”

Katsuki grunts noncommittally.

“What’s the verdict, doc?” Midnight asks flicking a gummy up and catching it with a snap of her teeth as Recovery Girl rolled back to grab a large jar of familiar cream. “She’ll live?”

“She’ll live, no thanks to herself.” Recovery Girl scoops up a large blob and slathers it onto Katsuki’s chest to a twitch. “Is there anything that’s been concerning you? Your medical history isn’t reliable, recent things taken into consideration- and we’ll be discussing that at length, I assure you.” Katsuki gets a sharp look.

Other than All For One rummaging around in my chest?

“None,” Katsuki grumbles, watching her scar disappear under a thick layer of slime green cream.

This gets her a sceptical, and rather derisive, snort.

Chapter End Notes

Basically a chapter establishing some things since we veer away from canon and I apologize in advance for the word vomit.

Alright, so hear me out. The Hero Society is messy with the fall of

All Might, we know that. I refuse to believe people aren't, you know, concerned with what that means with someone like Endeavour stepping up to fill the spot. They're part of something and they hear things and they see things - they're not stupid people but they're part of a system.

People who want the Hero Society to remain the way it is, and considers it being more good than bad, are, obviously, people part of it and those actively contributing to it (U.A. and Pro-Heroes). The Hero Course is wired the way it is for a reason - we've got the Sports Festival made up the way it is, for a *reason*.

Why these people? U.A. allowed All Might onto its campus, there is a vested interest there, and Nighteye, if anyone, believes in the idea of the Symbol of Peace - I think that's pretty obvious. Tsukauchi is already involved and his quirk is nifty in dealing with this situation and someone like Katsuki who is in a compromised situation because of her relation to Himiko and Dabi. He's also a friend of All Might.

Katsuki is involved with 1-A, that means keeping their teachers in the loop, at least those who are now aware of the Midoriya situation, that is; Midnight, Present Mic and Eraserhead.

I like to think Best Jeanist invited himself. He's also the Number Three Hero and, unlike Hawks, who ranks higher, he's not, ya know, a fan of Endeavour.

I hope this makes sense to someone other than me because my initial thought when considering them was basically *what a fucking odd group*.

I was away working the days before Christmas and then I've been a total sleeping bag recovering from social overload but I am back! And I will do my level best to catch-up to all your wonderful comments the following days but I am dead tired and craving sleep so gonna throw this up after some late night editing.

Love you guys.

I hang about tumblr as artsy-death if you're about there and this has been chapter 41 of In The End.

I hope you enjoyed!

Compromises In Identity

Chapter Notes

Shitty Hair - Kirishima

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Feeling rather twitchy, and quite done with *everything*, Katsuki pulls the shirt Mina had borrowed her with some unnecessary hard yanking before forcefully stilling and hissing out a breath, knuckles bunched in the fabric at her hip as she glared hard at the wall in front of her.

She can hear Midnight and Recovery Girl talking in low voices behind the curtain, the younger of the two having stepped out to take a phone call while Katsuki got to the *mental health* part of her check-up, and there's a thinly frayed level of *done* causing something of a pounding headache as she struggles for patience.

Katsuki has done the whole medical check-up song-and-dance before. She doesn't *mind*, necessarily. She's rather not her body decided to just *not* which is why she slathers her chest with the creams prescribed to her, drinks her water, does her stretches, eats healthy and exercise regularly.

She also *likes* doing most of those things so it isn't a *pain*.

And when she'd first woken up, with enough anxiety ramped up inside of her that her ability to function just went out the window, she'd taken the pills and watched herself not function with a jumbled sort of helplessness snared into it all because her body just doesn't *like it*.

But she'd tried because her brain *refusing to make sense* is scary on a visceral level.

Her genetic isn't made for anything to mess with it. Her heart beats faster, her blood pumps faster, she fucking *sweats* nitroglycerin and at some point that just made for a bad mix-up with most medications and she'd had to accept that and *move the fuck on*.

So she listens, she tries, she quite *patiently* suffers through it even when medical specialists clicks their tongues and serve her judgement *anyway*.

Katsuki hisses air through her teeth.

She knows her scars doesn't make sense (to anyone but her), she knows her brain doesn't make sense (not even to her), she knows her fucking *existence* is too *messy* to slap a diagnosis on and she *gets* Recovery Girl's concerns but it's hardly *her fault* she doesn't understand the fine points of dissociation.

Does she turn into Amélie? Normally, *no*. She still recognises herself as Katsuki because otherwise Mitsuki and Masaru would have started questioning things a long fucking time ago.

Does she know why her last dissociation was abnormal by the *established pattern*?

Katsuki remembers *shit* and Recovery Girl is clearly more informed on the matter because apparently she'd been a *mess* and thought she was twenty-two and newly dead and wasn't that just a thing Katsuki needed in her life?

Had All For One doing whatever fuck he'd done screwed with her fucking *dissociation*? Was that a *thing*?

Katsuki does not want it to be a thing. She finds the aftermaths of her dissociations bad enough without tipping towards a dead woman even more *badly*. They're not consistent things, it all depends on the fucking *trigger*, and All For One is a *new* situation and-

Katsuki's knuckles whiten and then slowly loosens and she lets go of the shirt.

In the end Recovery Girl *knows* what her old medical professionals *hadn't* and she gets why there are concerns and question all around.

She feels like a fucking cactus with the way her skin is itching after having herself so thoroughly looked over and she feels violated in a way that isn't sensible considering Recovery Girl had been nothing short of *professional*.

She snaps her teeth self-chidingly, takes a look at her neon green tights clashing horribly with the orange and blue splattered shirt, and tells herself to *fucking get over it*.

Katsuki steps out from the curtains and does not scowl at the two women when they turn to her.

"Ah, good, there is one last thing I want to talk to you before you leave." Recovery Girl offers a handful of gummi bears and Katsuki

reflexively accepts them before they can go spilling over the floor, snapping her hand tight around them and drawing them close. “Now, with how extensive the scarring on your chest is a top surgery is out of the question. But there are still other options for someone in your situation should you want it.” A pause, Midnight pretending not to listen in as her thumbs moved over the screen of her phone. “There are hormone treatments, for one, and-“

“Not interested,” Katsuki interrupts more sharply than the concern warranted.

“I understand that it’s a sensitive situation,” Recovery Girl says, eyes studying her. “But the body you’re in is yours and it is within your right to make it conform to the gender you are if you so *want*.” Recovery Girl clasps her hands together. “It is a personal thing, in the end, and it’s not a decision you have to make today or even this year but it has to be *yours*.”

It’s not like Katsuki hasn’t considered it.

How often hasn’t she looked over at Mitsuki and wondered what she would look like if her body had been softer, her jaw less sharp, her chest less flat-

She’d done her research, looking into the options, weighed them as she tried to make sense of what she is *now* as opposed to the two people who had *been*.

Katsuki has good days, she has bad days, she has fucking *shitty* days.

There are days when she looks into the mirror and still expects something other than dusty blonde spikes and red eyes but she’s also, at snails pace, coming to terms with that *this is her*.

It’s not like hormones would change that. Maybe it would make her feel better about herself, maybe she’ll want them down the line but Katsuki *doesn’t know*. Because she’s still coming to terms with what it she is *right now*.

For the first time in eight years people are looking at her and using the right pronouns and she *likes it*.

She knows she’s a woman, she can correct people who believe differently, or not, and for now that is quite enough. She likes her scarred flat chest, she’d liked the pleasure she’d found with Dabi, and she likes the strength of her muscles and the veins that strains against

her skin as she clenches her fists.

Her body in all its senselessly scarred and nitroglycerin sweating *glory*.

It's a fucking uphill battle, she doesn't know if there'll ever be a time when she's just *happy* with who she is because the very concept is a fucking *laugh* when every good thing is just offset by something shitty.

But she's *trying*.

"I know," Katsuki says gruffly. "Thank you, for thinking of it," she adds grudgingly because Recovery Girl is the first who'd thought to *bring it up*.

She's relived at the response, at the adjustment around her, the way these Heroes are trying to do *something*. She's not overly impressed by the immediate idea of *making use of her* but what the hell, she's living in this world and she's so fucking stuck in how to handle *anything* at this point so she can go along with it because *what fucking else is she supposed to do?*

(The answer is, obviously, to become a Villain, and Katsuki is *aware of it* in a way that is very un-Hero like but fucking *still*).

She needs a vacation. No one is interested in giving her one and it's fucking *unfair*.

Just a weekend get-away in a shitty hotel would be welcome at this point but that's not happening because Katsuki decided that it was a good idea to smear nitroglycerin down a Hero's face and she's not in jail because *she doesn't fucking know*.

She has no idea how her blood pressure is *slightly elevated but otherwise normal* but hell.

Focus forward, she clings to it at this point, but what else is she supposed to do?

Her body is healthy, if a bit stiff from the scarring, she's allowed to use her right pronouns because everyone she was interested in keeping it from in the interest of *something* fucking *knows* and she's not stuck in the seat of pretending to be a dead boy.

Positives. *Hah*.

There is a strange hollow feeling inside her chest, a persistent prickling coldness that she cannot make sense of, but at this point Katsuki is just ready to write it off as *another thing to get fucking used to*. Because it's not turning up on any tests, people know shit about quirks other than *it's an extra fucking toe joint*, and the one person who might have answers is locked up and asking to see him is sure to get her so many red warning flags in her profile that she's just not gonna *bother*.

She's on thin ice for her association with Dabi and Himiko, she has no idea why the *fuck* people are letting her get away with it, but she's fucking *wary*.

So she can suck this up, just like she's done with every other shitty thing that comes with being who she is.

Katsuki is good at that sort of thing.

-

Midnight halts her before they can step out of the large U.A. building and Katsuki prickles at the feeling of a hand on her shoulder.

But it disappears quickly and she peers up at the other woman after shifting her feet back to put some distance between them.

There's a part of her that is drawn to Midnight in a way that makes Katsuki want to duck down and look away. They're the antithesis of each other and where Katsuki doubts Midnight wields her body as a weapon.

But she respects Midnight – the woman had helped her through an episode of dissociation and she hadn't made a *thing* out of it which Katsuki appreciates. She understands Aizawa's concern, and on some level she appreciates it because she'd been one of his students.

And even after finding out he'd visited her in the hospital – keeps looking out for her and that brings all sorts of complicated feelings.

But Midnight brings a level concern without *pushing* which is different and she's a woman, who is also thirty, like her, which is *different*.

Katsuki has a lot of complicated feelings about a lot of different things and sometimes it's easier not to linger on it but it feels like lately she's been nothing *but* linger because everything is messy in all sorts of directions.

“Before I return you to the tender mercies of your former classmates,” Midnight says and Katsuki refocuses back on the situation at hand with a crease in her brow. “There’s something I want to talk to you about.”

Katsuki hesitates but ultimately eases back to some semblance of attention.

There’s not much difference between their heights, really, just a few inches, but Midnight’s heels gives her enough of a leg-up that Katsuki tilts her head back to meet her gaze.

“I’ve been thinking of this for a while now so humour me for a moment here. You were twenty-two when you died.” Midnight is looking at her and Katsuki realises after a second that she’s waiting for confirmation and she slowly dips her head, unsure to the direction of the conversation, “You’d graduated high-school, hit your twenties, reached the legal drinking age, moved out, had a relationship or two, or at least some fun, judging by the way you dove back into things.”

“You’re not wrong,” Katsuki agrees, shifting her feet.

“You were living your life,” Midnight presses. “And then you died and for the last eight years you’ve played at being a child, going through puberty a second time, working under the rules of the guardians you found yourself with. Your ability to make decisions taken out of your hands, bedtime set – children work under completely different expectations than adults. That,” Midnight says and Katsuki stares at the shaping of her red lips, something coiling in her chest, “is not something you go through unaffected.”

“What are you getting at?” she asks warily.

“When I picked you up it didn’t cross your mind to say no, did it?” Midnight’s eyes are knowing but not unkind. “You didn’t press me when I said I wouldn’t tell you what the meeting was about because on some level you view me as person of authority, even now, because that’s how you’ve been living for the last eight years.”

Katsuki’s shoulders are slowly curling up with tension and she flexes her fingers in a vain attempt to release some of it.

“It’s not just people judging you by the age you look, you’ve adjusted to it. You know people look at you and see someone far younger and you’ve gone out of your way to meet those expectations because you made a choice to try and function with the situation instead of saying

anything. It was your decision to make and I understand it,” Midnight’s voice gentles. “You found yourself in a bad situation and for better or for worse you’re the one living with the consequences of it.”

Katsuki reaches up before she remembers that her headphones are still in her backpack inside Mina’s room and she lets her hand fall limp at her side.

“You were twenty-two when you died,” Midnight says and Katsuki doesn’t want to hear the words but she finds herself stuck in place, a condemnation and reality she’s not really sure how to react to. “But you weren’t allowed to live the years of your twenties as you were supposed to and that has left its traces on your mentality. I think that, in some ways you’re growing up all over again in the way you function within the expectations of society.”

There’s a moment where Katsuki stares at the hand in front of her but this time when Midnight places it on her shoulder she doesn’t flinch back but allows it to settle warm and grounding with the cold spreading ugly through her chest.

“I am not judging you, and I don’t think anyone can truly understand what you went through and are going through but you. But you have to understand that when I learnt about you I was hesitant to accept it. You’re prone to lashing out, you’re antisocial and you’re *angry* which is normal and perfectly understandable for someone in your situation. But it’s not the actions of a well-adjusted adult but more like the teenager you look like.”

There’s a knot in her chest and buzz in her ear and when Midnight’s hand tightens on her shoulder she roughly shrugs it off, taking a hard step back.

“What the fuck am I supposed to do with that?” Katsuki demands, nausea crawling thick up her throat. “As if I’m not second-guessing myself badly enough as it is, huh?” she spits out. “I’m made up of fucking dead people! Two of them! But if there’s something I’ve always been fucking sure about it’s my *age* and now you’re telling me I’m not even doing *that* properly and-“

Katsuki sucks in a breath, squeezing her eyes shut and forcing herself to count backwards because she’s trembling, her brain is slipping, and for a moment Midnight’s face had flicks into a far more recognisable twenty-two-year-old and-

She's thirty.

She's *thirty* and-

"Life screwed you over but you have *time*. Time to figure out where you stand now that you're on your own. Maybe it's a good thing that you're not staying with your guardians at the moment – take it for what it is and allow yourself to explore who you want to be. You've already taken a step in the right direction – the hair, the name, you're not ignorant to the role you've played."

She knows Midnight means for her words to be reassuring but Katsuki is-

Katsuki really needs to sit down.

"I should have picked a better place to spring this on you," Midnight muses, glancing towards the door. "Come – let's head to my office. I think you need a bit of a breather."

-

Katsuki is still buzzing after three cups of tea in Midnight's office and Mina frowns at her and then sighs and she finds herself being nudged down on a couch.

"Stay," Mina tells her sternly. "I swear, I find myself regretting it whenever you wander off on your own. What did they do now?" Katsuki opens her mouth but then closes it with a grimace. "Of course you can't say anything about it." Mina's cheeks puff up with air that she slowly blows out, looking contemplative. "Katsuki, on a scale from one to ten, just how much trouble did you get yourself into this time?"

"Ah." Katsuki drags a hand through her hair. "Seven-ish?"

Mina closes her eyes.

"How?" she despairs, opening them. "I was hoping for a five. Is a five too much to ask for?"

"Considering it's *Katsuki* we should count anything under eight favourably," Shinsou drawls.

Mildly offended Katsuki turns her head to look at him as he leans casually against her shoulder, brandishing a hand of cards in front of her.

“We’re playing Shithead,” he tells her and Katsuki knows fuck-all what that is but a distraction is a distraction and she forces her brain to just... *not*.

She can have an existential crises when she has a pillow to scream into.

And no witnesses.

(What she really wants is a bottle of whiskey, a bloody horror game with a protagonist making stupid ass decisions, and the comfort of someone who gives zero fucks about the world and how she lives in it because Katsuki could really do with a dose of that).

“Never played it,” she grumbles.

“Did you live under a rock in your past life?” Shinsou folds his cards together and drags the one from the table back to make a proper pile. “It’s a two to four player game-“

“I’m getting snacks,” Mina proclaims, bouncing up and turning around. “Oh!” She halts. “Todoroki, you want to join in?”

Katsuki looks up as Shouto pauses, a book tucked under his arm and an empty tea cup cradled in his hands.

“I was just going to grab some more tea...” He holds it up, as if to offer evidence for his detour to the common area. “Oh, and your things are in my room, Katsuki.” His mismatched eyes meets her. “Present Mic left them after I told him Fuyumi is picking me up on Saturday. I thought it might be easier for us to bring it than taking it on your bike.”

“Thanks,” Katsuki grunts.

Mina’s eyes flickers curiously between them, one hand coming up to press against her cheek. “Already on first name basis? How scandalous.”

“I’m living with several Todoroki’s,” Katsuki says flatly.

“How many siblings do you have?” Shinsou splits the deck of cards in half and sorts through them in an easy familiar movement.

“Four.” Shouto seems to make a decision because he places his book down on the couch opposite them. “I’ll play – you need some help?”

He turns to Mina and a second later finds himself shepherded along to the kitchen, looking a bit bemused by the arm hooked into the crook of his but following along amenably enough.

“And you’re dating the dead one,” Shinsou says in an undertone, eyes on the table in front of him.

Katsuki twitches, turning towards him.

“How did you even meet him?”

“I like fighting, he likes fighting, it was a fucking match made in heaven.” Katsuki grabs the deck from his hand, letting them fall into the familiar motion of several swing cuts before letting the last one split the deck in half and falling into the motion of a riffle shuffle.

“Not been living under a rock I see,” Shinsou observes, leaning back. “Poker?”

“Among things.” Katsuki tilts her head, teeth flashing. “Having second thoughts?”

“As if.” Shinsou snatches the cards back. “You didn’t really strike me as the card type.”

“I’m not.” Mina and Shouto returns – most of it fruit, future-Hero-friendly snacking, but there’s a plate of cheese and crackers and Shouto is balancing a tray of glasses and a pitcher of orange juice that get piled onto the table. “I mostly played board games during high school-“

“You mean the proper geeky ones?” Shinsou interrupts, pausing mid-motion of starting to deal out the cards.

“Half of her bookcase is just filled with comics,” Mina confides, looking amused as she tore of a branch of grapes. “Don’t let her appearance fool you – Katsuki is a *nerd*.”

“They were fucking better in my world,” she grumbles. “Most of your stuff is just based on Pro-Heroes.”

“As opposed to?” Shouto ventures as he grabs for a knife.

“Made-up ones.” Katsuki catches the grape Mina throws to her and bites down on it. “I told ya, didn’t I? We didn’t have Heroes.”

People weren’t interested in make-believe Heroes when they had

living ones *right there*. It was glorified beyond belief but Katsuki had always liked her comics and she stuck to the American ones – it brought some distance to it and she made a point of only keeping up with the Japanese ones when it came to her internet searches.

She was so far disappointed to not have a bat-styled one amongst her comics but perhaps this world just wasn't ready for the dark broody Batman. They tended to favour the more... optimistic and media friendly ones.

The sort that lended towards enforcing a propaganda-style idea of Heroism.

That wasn't to say they didn't *exist*. It was niche and a pain to get hold of but humans would always be humans and anti-Heroes did exist in comics. They just weren't as popular and even frowned upon in some circles.

Books did better when it came to those kind of topics.

"What was that like anyway?" Shinsou wonders. "I can't really picture it."

"Shocking," Katsuki says grumpily. "Ask me again when I don't have a headache."

"Fine, fine." Shinsou's shoulder brushes against her own as he deals. "Hey, Todoroki – you know the rules of Shithead?"

Shouto pauses with a cracker of brie half-way to his mouth, eyes blank.

"... I'll take that as a no."

"You know, it hit me but we can't really be Bakusquad if you're not named Bakugou anymore," Mina muses after Shinsou had run through the rules and dealt the cards out.

"You could just *not*," Katsuki says flatly.

"No – no I'm invested!" Mina sorts through her cards. "Besides if there's a Dekusquad we gotta have something of our own."

Dekusquad?

She glances to Shouto who is staring at his cards with a small crease of his brows and far more attention than the game deserved.

“Why me? Just make it *Minasquad* or fucking something,” Katsuki grouches, favouring her with a sharkish grin when golden eyes narrows at her. “It’s a good one as any.”

“It’s fair.” Shinsou looks visibly amused.

“I like it,” Shouto muses, picking a card carefully and finally placing it down.

Mina pouts at them but there’s a slight dusting of red on her pink cheeks.

“It’s not a joking matter! Besides, we can’t be *Minasquad* when Katsuki makes such a cute mascot for us.”

“*Cute?*” Katsuki echoes, mildly offended. “I’m not fucking *cute*.”

“I mean, look at those squishable cheeks of yours!” Mina coos.

“If I’m cute then you’re fucking adorable,” Katsuki musters up, spitting them out before she can think twice about them.

Mina gasps, clutching her chest, and Katsuki’s mind catches up with her words. “Adorable? You hear that Shinsou?” She demands, rounding on him. “Our resident grouch called me *adorable*.”

“Does that make me the dreamy one?” Shinsou smirks as he bites down on a piece of apple. “Or maybe the group *charmer*.”

“Fuck off,” Katsuki growls, ears growing warm.

“Cutiesquad,” Shouto muses thoughtfully under his breath as he picks a card and flicks it in place.

-

Katsuki clicks the helmet on before crouching down to unscrew the lid of the water bottle secured to her bike. She fishes for the bottle of electrolyte pills Recovery Girl had issued her (lemon flavoured with an extra dose of Vitamin C), pops one in and holds it up against the setting sun to watch it slowly dissolve.

“Hey- Baku- I mean, Touya, hold up ma-” Katsuki straightens up, turning around to watch the boy jogging up to her with a self-chiding sort of grimace, hand coming up to rub against the back of red spikes. “That didn’t come out any way like I wanted it to,” Shitty Hair admits with a grimace.

“What do you want?”

“Look-“ Shitty Hair comes to halt in front of her. “I wanted to apologize.”

Katsuki gives him a blank look.

“I’ve been thinking and- I guess it isn’t very fun to hear someone call you a ‘manly man’ when you’re not really a man,” Shitty Hair says, shoulders lowering and eyes meeting hers.

“It’s not like you knew.” Maybe it had bothered her but ultimately, that’s on her, for not telling and not correcting.

He’s a fucking kid, his quirk is not mindreading last time she checked, and the people she’d lived with had no idea they’d been harbouring a pretender for eight-fucking-years.

Maybe she’d gotten twitchy and a bit defensive but she also just don’t fucking like the conceptualised idea of some weird *manly man* idealism crossed with whatever idea of heroism he had.

She doesn’t like it, never will, fact of the day.

“I still should have picked up on it!” Shitty Hair folds his arms. “I just thought you didn’t like me-“

“I don’t,” Katsuki says flatly, not interested in any misunderstandings on the matter because she *doesn’t*.

“But I’m still – I’m supposed to be a Hero-“

“Doesn’t mean you’re magically going to be able to pick up on someone’s gender, especially when they don’t fucking want you to,” Katsuki snorts. “Look, I don’t care about your apology. You can call me man or bro, you use it for fucking everyone. Just use the right pronouns and don’t call me *a manly man and we’re fine*.”

Shitty Hair opens his mouth, closes it.

“You mean it?” he presses. “Because I can stop if it makes you uncomfortable-“

“Just don’t fucking call me Touya-nee we’re fucking *great*.”

“Oh.” Shitty Hair offers her a hesitant grin. “Not a fan?”

“No,” Katsuki growls, daring him to push it.

“I’ll stick to Touya-senpai then,” Shitty Hair says decisively.

Katsuki gives him a look of deep loathing and the shithead *laughs*.

“You better come visit often – it’s not going to be the same without you. It’s going to be a fight for the top rank in the class without you to claim it.”

“I’m twice your age, it would be a fucking embarrassment if I let the top score to one of you,” Katsuki grumbles, giving her bottle a swirl before pulling it open with her teeth and downing a third of it.

“Strangely, that doesn’t make me feel better.” Shitty Hair folds his arms. “Just you wait- we’ll catch-up to you. Maybe we’ll even work together in the same agency! Todoroki did his internship with Endeavour so maybe I’ll get an invite next time as I claim the top spot.”

Katsuki snorts, closing the bottle.

“Don’t hold your breath.”

“Seriously though.” Shitty Hair glances back for a moment before lowering his voice. “Look, I went to the same middle school as Mina and- I admire her, you know? It was hard, watching her handle... you know. So, don’t be a stranger – you’re one of us.”

Katsuki narrows her eyes at him but the sheer fucking *sincerity* ultimately bleeds the annoyance out of her.

She’s tired, she wants a nap, she knows she’s not going to be getting a fucking nap because Endeavour had already messaged her and she had a training session waiting for her.

Fancy that.

“I’m going to be fucking busy but I’ll do my best,” she says grudgingly.

“Fist-bump swear?”

“Don’t fucking push it.”

Chapter End Notes

Have I been looking forward to this chapter?

Have I *ever*.

Because we're sorting through mental health issues in this story, as properly as I can, and by the Heavens - if you're a twenty-two-year-old living your life as an eight-year-old there are *complications*.

So - Midnight. Because Midnight knows what it's like to live in a world that looks at you and make judgement and she knows the implications of what it means to live under that judgement. She's sharp - I like her.

I'm all caught-up with your comments (save the last chapter which I always try to time with the upload of a new one) and I'm absolutely here for it. You guys make me so very happy and I cannot express that enough.

As always I hang about on tumblr as artsy-death if you're about there. I'm chatty so don't hesitate to throw me a question here or there if you're confused about something or the other.

I hope you enjoyed!

Decisions

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Katsuki pulls the bedside table forward, crouching down and drawing a screwdriver from her pocket and removing screws before digging it into the side and carefully prying it off the wall. It's a bit of careful wiggling to make sure she doesn't accidentally leave any marks but it comes off with a stretch of cords.

She rolls her sleeve up to avoid getting any dust on it and wiggles her hand in and to the side until she's nearly flat against the wall with her wrist stretched awkwardly into it, fingers finally touching against the flat round head of the phone and she gets the tips of her fingers carefully around it before pulling it out.

She breathes out, resting her forehead against the wall with a closing of her eyes as it ripples into the stretch of an apple orchard and forcing her mind to focus on the here and now as she twitches her fingers along with her counting.

A tremor runs through her and she grimaces before prying them open, wall thankfully back.

The bedside table is on the left side of the bed, placing it away from the immediate view of the person stepping into the room, and she settles down with a shove of her arm to cover it up as she wipes the screen clean before powering it on.

She glances towards the curtain drawn over the window as she waits for it, entering the ten digit password when prompted, and then the password following it. It's all nonsensical – nothing that matches or makes sense, uppercase and lowercase alternated with numbers and special characters.

It's connected to absolutely nothing, just memorisation, and Katsuki is a paranoid bastard.

Finally it opens up and Katsuki opens the messaging app, entering the number and sending off an x before deleting it.

It's a stupid system, no doubt about it, but it's the best she could think of. She doesn't trust using a computer, she'd paid it in cash with a pre-

paid card that was associated to no-one, and worst came to worst she can just blow it up.

“So fucking dramatic.” She drags a hand through her hair, staring out at nothing inside the large empty space of her room.

A dirty little secret, huh?

She reaches up behind her to grab the water bottle from the table, yanking it open with her teeth and tilting the bottom of it to rest against her knee as she stared at the blank wooden doors of the wardrobe.

There’s nervous energy running through her body, a thrum since Midnight had vaulted her world view on her own established character, and she drags her teeth against the plastic of the bottle, worrying it restlessly.

There’s no sure chance Dabi will answer – it’s the middle of the night, he might be out doing *Villainous things*, or he could just be fucking sleeping like a normal person.

But she wants him to answer.

-

She’s curled up with her phone on low lightning, scanning through different Hero forums some two hours later when she remembers Aizawa’s remark on the *statement* Endeavour had made and pauses.

Katsuki backtracks from the forum and opens the HeroTube app, putting in *Endeavour* + *Speech* + *Katsuki* and hits enter.

She stares.

The number of view counts is... unnerving.

Katsuki is aware of the way her name gets thrown around on forums – there’s a fair number of judgemental people blaming her for All Might’s fall and while some had taken voice to defend her it was drowned out by the masses who wasn’t impressed in the least.

The misgendering, at least, was condemned even by those who didn’t take her side, for the most part.

And it’s not like she gives a shit about the pettiness of strangers.

She presses the video, settling back and resting it against her knees with a crease in her brows as it swirls to life.

“Endeavour will take the stage in a moment to comment on the recent rumour on-“

Katsuki drags the small bar forward, releasing it with a brief turn of the buffering bar before Endeavour came into view.

“- the League of Villains-“

She pulls it forward another step.

“- I am stepping forward following this-“

Another one.

“Touya Katsuki.”

She pauses at the sound of her name and pulls her fingers away from the screen.

“- Has been accepted into my Agency following her actions during her kidnapping at the hands of the League of Villains. I worked closely on the case and frankly, she’s wasted in a school setting. It is my duty to support the coming generation of Heroes and it is not one I take lightly.”

Endeavour looks out at her from the screen, his gaze impossible to read where he stands in front of the microphones, hands on the podium and mouth hard and serious as the bright flashing lights from the cameras washes over his face.

The scar on his face stands out starkly, the flames on his face toned down and rolling almost calmly.

“When I met Touya Katsuki I saw someone who’d outstripped her curriculum, who’d faced a great trial and come out all the greater for it, and who would benefit from a guiding hand following a great adversary.”

Katsuki stares at the phone.

“It is the pleasure of Endeavour Hero Agency to offer her this opportunity and we hope that we might serve as an inspiration for the future of our Society and its Heroes.”

She pauses the video, mulling over the words with a creasing of her brows as she pressed her thumb to her lips.

The words, in themselves, weren't anything surprising. They could even be read as benevolent.

The Number One Hero taking his new position with the levity it demanded, supporting one of the top students at U.A. following her very public kidnapping.

He knows that she isn't the sixteen-year-old she looks like and while she's a risk factor in other ways she's also an opportunity and due to her own actions she'd put herself at his disposal.

There is an obvious power vacuum with the fall of All Might and Endeavour had to step up in the aftermath of it. He didn't have the clout or popularity of All Might but he'd taken a step to do what the All Might had not– securing the younger generation to follow in his footsteps.

And by not picking his own son there is no accusation of nepotism to be made.

Clever, that's the word for it, Katsuki thinks, reluctantly impressed.

She watches through the rest of the video and Endeavour had clearly been ready to address the concerns.

She's young. She needs a guiding hand. He was prepared to be that hand.

Yadda, yadda.

There was a question about her name change that he managed to twist around to draw sympathy in a lapse of uncomfortable silence because while the matter of Todoroki Touya wasn't widely known or talked about media people were hungry and knowledgeable.

He was the better man, taking her on despite the reminder of his dead son.

Katsuki watches it all in morbid rapture.

Maybe it isn't so strange that Dabi had been able to disappear as he did when Endeavour had to have known that something wasn't quite right. He stands proud and unchallenged at the podium and his eyes warned people *not to push*.

He speaks shortly and dismissively on topics that *wasn't worth his time* and after years as serving as the Number Two Hero even the media knew there was no getting anything out of him if he didn't wish to

tell. What he spoke was his truth, what he allowed them to hear.

He isn't All Might but he'd made a reputation all of his own and the people wanted to hear what he said – wanted the reassurance of a Hero stepping up and taking action and he'd done that by taking her on.

Concerns were brought up but Endeavour didn't let them to take hold even if he did little to reassure – letting his actions speak for him.

He was taking the steps to ensure another power vacuum like All Might wouldn't happen again. *He* was stepping up to make a better society of tomorrow with the younger generation and with her out of U.A. his youngest son was sure to take the top spot and, in time, Endeavour would take credit for even that.

The phone on the floor buzzes and Katsuki jerks, clicking the button on the side of the screen to get rid of Endeavour's face and throwing it behind her on the bed as she blew out a harsh breath.

She reaches for the old lumpy thing on the floor, its small screen crowded with the short message.

XXX-XXXXXX-XX: Bad day?

Katsuki stares at it.

X: Good guessing or stalking?

XXX-XXXXXX-XX: Wouldn't you like to know.

XXX-XXXXXX-XX: Wackjob is

There's a row of messages that makes zero sense and Katsuki's mouth curls, imagining the scuffle that had no doubt broken out followed by a triumphant:

XXX-XXXXXX-XX: I left you a present!!

Katsuki blinks at the exclamation points from Himiko.

XXX-XXXXXX-XX: I was sneaky so don't worry your pretty little head!

XXX-XXXXXX-XX: I fulfilled my mission and more ☐

There's a blank box but with how old the phone is Katsuki is left speculating about what kind of emoji Himiko thought suited her

message. Katsuki doesn't use the things – isn't much for texting in general.

XXX-XXXXX-XX: Under your pillow, silly.

XXX-XXXXX-XX: Hurry up!

The thought of Himiko having been on *Endeavour's* property should concern her but Himiko is *clever* and she's good at what she does. Katsuki knows fuck all what her quirk is but she's under the impression that if Himiko wants something done she makes it happen.

Whether it meant good things or bad things for her is always a debate.

Twisting around she presses up on her knees and reaches for her pillow, snagging a corner and pulling it aside and grabbing the rectangular box there before sinking down.

It's nondescript, *surprisingly*, but when she pulls it open she finds a mismatch of crammed things.

Katsuki lifts up the keyring – bright and eye-catching with a dangling... fluffy... dolphin? It doesn't look *quite* like a dolphin and red paint had crusted in its mouth, one of its fins charred into a sharp pointy plastic end.

She takes a discreet whiff of it but, yes, *paint*.

She places it slowly aside, doing her best to ignore the big black eyes staring soullessly out at nothing as she grabs blindly for the next thing Himiko had added.

She finds herself reluctantly amused as she finds a fake key that turns out to hide a tiny switch blade, another, actually proper, switch blade, a half-crushed bunch of wild flowers, a retro portable gaming device with an unfamiliar horror game, and a beaded friendship bracelet with a D, H and K amidst many hearts that she slips on almost immediately.

Katsuki turns it so the letters are facing against the inside of her wrist.

Soft. It's ridiculous but while it's mismatched at first glance the colours (yellow for Himiko, blue for Dabi and orange for Katsuki herself) marks the care Himiko had put into it.

Dabi's gifts are easy to pick out and the first one very welcome. It's a

familiar package of black wrapped cigarettes, half-empty, or full, she supposes, pocketing them.

The second one is a bit more... curious.

She turns the broad silvery band of the ring and she strokes her thumb over the intricate black pattern, trying to connect it to *something* because Dabi rarely did anything without purpose.

There's a half-settled sun, or perhaps a rising sun, in golden against silver against black and-

Dabi is a mottled painting of metal staples and hoops crowding along the arch of his ears so Katsuki supposes there's a fancy for jewellery there but he'd never gone out of his way to get anything for her.

(Katsuki admits to herself that before U.A. there's no fucking chance it hell she would have accepted it because *it wasn't what they'd been*).

She flicks it up.

Catches it.

Considers it with a thoughtful spin.

And then she slips the ring onto her middle finger, clenching down, trying to get a feel for it. Despite the pattern there's nothing that snags and it's mostly flat – not the kind to get in the way, and-

Katsuki stares at the bracelet, at the ring, trying to comprehend that her two Villains had gone out of their way to get it to her beneath the roof of the new Number One Hero.

XXX-XXXXX-XX: Did ya like the bracelet I made??

Katsuki takes a picture of her left hand, showcasing both bracelet and ring in the low lightning. It's pixelated from the bad camera but gets the point across, she thinks, and several hearts follows in response.

There are limitations to what they can say like this – her and Dabi's messages had always been short, a deleted path of words. Their intentions had always translated better in violence and moments caught together in the aftermath of it.

The comforting blink of location to meet up on her phone.

The phone buzzes and she twists her wrist to look at the small screen.

There's a picture attached and Katsuki's brows furrows before she opens it up and finds herself staring at a package of ice cream with a spoon sticking out of it. The phone had been angled to show just the wood of the table beneath it, chipped where a knife had dug into it to make a crudely made sea of flowers that had to be Himiko's handiwork.

Dabi likes chocolate but for some fucking reason he couldn't stand the taste of chocolate ice cream and on every occasion she'd known him to pick a simple plain vanilla while she tended to favour the chocolate and vanilla mix.

Katsuki closes her eyes and tries desperately to ignore the little curl of warmth in her chest.

He'd clearly done his best, the vanilla carefully scraped out to be consumed to leave a half-melted mess of chocolate mix behind.

Her hand tightens around the phone and she draws it closer, pressing her forehead against it.

Dabi, you absolute mushy fucker.

-

The air leaves her lungs but she's already arching her hips up, legs wrapping around Endeavour's arm and there's a liberating sort of freedom in the baring of her teeth as the explosion rocks from her right foot, sending her harder against the floor as Endeavour twists his head out of the way and bodily fucking *hauls her through the air*.

She releases his arm and twists to take the brunt on her forearms as she rolls across the math, vaulting up and steadying herself as she forces herself not to pant, sweat dripping down her face, her shirt sticking to her back.

The air of coiling hot with heat, her mouth dry as a desert, and there's blood dripping down her lips from burst blood vessels in her nose but there's triumph in her eyes as Endeavour touches against the burns on his shoulder.

"Better," he comments, rolling his shoulders. "There's still a long way to go but you're lasting longer."

Katsuki is standing by sheer fucking will alone – her sweat is pooled and splattered on the mat and she's got no idea of what is

nitroglycerin and what is not.

The heat of his quirk forces hers into overdrive and it's a dangerous thing to not have control of but it's made her doubly aware of her body. Learning to shut off the sweat glands in her palms and soles had taken time but she'd managed it – if she could just figure out a way to safely *limit* how her body responded to his heat...

She wipes her hands on her pants, making a note to drop them in the shower as soon as her heartrate had eased to avoid any accidental explosions.

Endeavour throws her a bottle of water and she catches it, unscrewing it as she dropped down onto the floor, wiping at her nose with the back of her wrist before tilting her head back and guzzling gratefully.

A second one gets placed near her ankle.

“Do you have everything you need for tomorrow?”

Katsuki twitches, head rising.

“I need to get a fucking duffle bag of something,” she admits after a slow second of her brain realising that, *yes*, those words had actually come out of his mouth. “Backpack won't fit with the Hero suit and shit.”

“I'll arrange for it.”

Katsuki stares at him.

“Anything else?”

What are you playing at?

“A book,” she blurts out.

“A *book*,” Endeavour repeats, unimpressed.

“Yeah, you know – it's a two hour trip to Best Jeanist's office,” Katsuki rolls her neck and bares her teeth in a mockery of a smile. “You wouldn't want me to get *bored*, would you?”

The look he levels her tells her he very much doesn't *care*.

“Take one from my office,” he says dismissively. “You might as well educate yourself instead of wasting time.”

Freshly showered and dressed in jeans and t-shirt with a towel slung over her neck Katsuki ventures into Endeavour's office, eyes dragging over the neatly contained area and the bare walls.

With his ego she'd half-expected news articles of his *heroic deeds* framed and hung but instead there's a complete lack of personal touch with only a single potted plant in the window.

Does no one in this house know how to fucking decorate? She drags a finger over the prickly thorns of the cactus before turning to the desk.

There are piles of papers on it with a pillow behind it to sit on and a single pen carefully placed.

It's the rows and rows of books that catches and holds her attention, however, and Katsuki threads her way closer.

Most of them are on topics of Heroism, but also laws, customs, languages, a good pile of them on different topics of science which crowded with every sign of being well-read on their shelves.

She isn't surprised to realise that not a single one of them are the kind meant for leisure reading – it is all information, history crowded alongside psychology and criminology, an eclectic gathering of books on quirks that Katsuki recognises from her own bookshelf (and had just left her exasperated with the non-information and speculations), and a single book on cactus care in the middle of it all.

Efficient, is her first though.

What the fuck, is her second.

There are biographies published by other Heroes on one shelf beside studies on All Might; *The Rise of a New Society* in its thick golden lettering against blue and *The Golden Age* beside it.

"Talk about being married to your work," Katsuki breathes, crouching down to scan over the row of medical aid crowded alongside gender studies, her gaze snagging on one boldly lettered with *She, Him, They: A Study of Gender Non-Conformity* and another one titled *Being Human: A Love Letter to Mutant Quirks*.

She finds herself pulling the last one out, mildly curious as she scans through the summary of the struggles of a woman born with a quirk

that gave her the appearance of a watery shaped blob dressed in a sharp suit but lacking any sort of face with only a pair of eyeballs floating in the middle of it.

It makes sense for a Hero to be well-versed in all sorts of topics, and it's not the unhealthy obsession of Sir Nighteye whose office is something out of her nightmares, but fucking *still*.

There are no books on Endeavour himself, which doesn't write out the possibility of them crowding in his bedroom, but it does mean she's out of her first pick.

Tomorrow she's heading to Best Jeanist's office, in a short month she's taking her provisional Hero exam and after that she'd be working side-by-side with Endeavour which is fucking... something.

She touches her fingers against her wrist, and then her finger, feeling the beads and then the metal.

Katsuki is living in a world of Heroes and Villains. She's not overly impressed, she finds most of it ridiculous, and she's balancing relationships with people on either part of the rail.

Maybe there's a point to what Midnight says when she tells her that Katsuki had gotten used to the age she'd been living as. And if she wants a say, if she doesn't want it to play out the way that seems inevitable, she'll need to do something fucking *more* than just finding herself in it.

Katsuki is no All Might but maybe it's time she starts looking at it as a fucking *opportunity* rather than something forced upon her and do something about the change everyone around her seems to be determined to put into motion.

-

Maybe it's about fucking time she has that *talk* with All Might, too.

Chapter End Notes

Look at us, getting ever closer to the Provisional Hero Exam Arc!

And we're all familiar with how that plays out, *aren't we?*

Ya know, I had to think long and hard about Endeavour's library but say what you will about the dude - he made the top rank and

he's kept it so I reason that being knowledgeable had a hand in that.

Can't build something out of nothing.

Knowing something isn't the same thing as understanding it.

Next chapter: Katsuki goes on a trip! How exciting.

Your love, support and feedback is amazing and helps me shape up this story to what it is so thank you so much for your comments <3

I hang about tumblr as artsy-death (will add a pic of the ring there for those who are interested) and this has been chap 43 of In The End.

I hope you enjoyed!

Gear-Up

Chapter Notes

Round Cheeks = Uraraka

See Through = Hagakure

Froggy = Asui

Punk = Jirou

Ponytail = Yaoyorozu

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

The bag she finds on her bed after breakfast is large enough that the straps had been adjusted to be carried on the back while keeping the form of an oversized hockey bag. It's branded with ENDEAVOUR HERO AGENCY in sharp lettering, black with orange in a cross over it.

Her Hero suit fits easily in a bottom compartment and she packs the rest above it, giving up on any sort of system once she realised it would all just end up a hopeless mess anyway and cramming her backpack with essentials in last before closing it shut.

Her sweater slouches on her shoulder but she'd bothered to pull on a t-shirt beneath it which hid her scar, noise cancelling headphones around her neck, and she puts her sunglasses on before she crouches down to hang the dolphin on the side of the bag.

Katsuki straightens up, mentally counting through her belongings, decides that the essentials are there and anything else can be bought.

She still got Endeavour's card – at this point she's half-certain he's just not going to ask for it back.

She shoulders on the bag and the dolphin ends up near her shoulder, swinging with her movement as she kicks the door shut behind her before making her way to the front door.

“Ready to go?” Fuyumi greets her, already dressed and ready to go in jeans and a softly patterned blouse with a sweater pulled over it.

It's late summer, the winds are picking up again and Katsuki makes a note to buy herself a jacket.

Katsuki ends up taking up an entire four-seat corner, dropping her bag on two of them and sprawling out on her back on the two opposite, one leg thrown over the other, headphones on and ignoring the elderly couple shooting her highly offended looks across the corridor.

She's got her headphones two steps from full silence and the train is impressively smooth beneath her.

There's sunshine shining through the windows, she's getting a break from Endeavour and the Todoroki household – it should be a good day but Katsuki's been feeling off all morning and she squeezes her eyes shut behind her sunglasses.

Bad days, good days, shitty days.

There's no *reason* for her to feel the way she does, nothing she can reason up, but it's there all the same, nagging and pushing at her thoughts like an ugly threading of fucked-up that there's no fixing.

She breathes out through clenched teeth, opening and closing her mouth in an attempt to relax her jaw as she focuses on the silence of the world around her.

-

Katsuki wakes up a bit blearily to a nudge against her leg and she opens her eyes to find her arm thrown over her eyes, sunglasses pressing down uncomfortably against her nose, and she's got a headache that makes her *very much not want to deal with the world*.

Another nudge and she drags her arm off her face, levelling a flat, unimpressed stare at the person bothering her.

An eerie blank eyed man stands in the middle of the cart, his hair white. There's a flat sort of... deadness to him that makes the hair on the back of her neck rise and lips draw back in instant dislike.

"What?" Katsuki growls, shoving her headphones off one ear.

"I'd like a seat, if you don't mind, *Touya-san*." His voice is smooth, low, and Katsuki is *not* impressed.

"How the fuck do you know my name?" she demands.

"I dare say there are few who don't recognise you," the man responds, looking far too at ease. "You are quite the public figure."

She bares her teeth, slowly dragging herself up.

“Find somewhere else to sit,” she says flatly.

“Everywhere else is full, I’m afraid.” He gestures, fingers strangely elegant, and to her consternation there’s not a single free space in view. “So if you don’t mind...”

“I do fucking mind,” Katsuki mutters but reaches across to drag her bag to the floor, shuffling to take the outer seat as it blocked up the two by the window.

The man sinks into the seat across her and Katsuki’s fingers clenches tight as she turns her head to stare stubbornly outside, avoiding the dead eyes across her.

“So...”

She twitches.

“What’s it like living with the Number One Hero?”

Katsuki adjust her headphones back up and turns the dial to shut off all noise before slouching against the bag tipped against the seat beside her.

-

She only just barely resist kicking the man as he gives her a completely fake smile as she roughly yanks her bag past him, her shoulders curled stiff and jaw locked tight as she steps out into to the fresh air, doors closing behind her.

“Fucking creep...”

Katsuki shoulders her pack, the bottom of it nearly at her knees, and forces herself to fucking *move*, not bothering to dodge out of the way of people but rather forcing them to hurry out of her path as she makes her way down the stairs.

Best Jeanist had offered to pick her up and there’s indeed a familiar tall slim figure waiting by a far too small car for those long legs. He’s all jeans, as was his usual style, one hand resting on his hip and conversing with a small group of high school students who were buzzing around him.

He looks over the head of them and Katsuki forces her jaw to loosen

as she grasps at one strap.

“Touya.”

The name makes the teenagers turn around and Katsuki stiffens uncomfortably under the sudden attention, ducking her head and forcing one of the boys to dodge out of her path as she stepped up to the Pro-Heroes side.

“It’s been a delight talking to you all but we have some important business to take care of.” Best Jeanist straightens up. “I hope you understand.”

There’s a round of *aww*’s that Katsuki ignores, staring at the ground as Best Jeanist urged them on.

Soon after a hand settles on her shoulder, ushering her into the car and simultaneously relieving her off her bag before closing the door shut.

Katsuki slouches down in her seat, removing her sunglasses to fiddle with as Best Jeanist slipped inside, knees pushing up in a way that was nothing short of awkward, and Katsuki stares, wondering why the fuck he hadn’t bothered to get a bigger one.

Not that the thought of him in an SUV merges any better.

“You look like you chewed on something sour,” Best Jeanist comments as he starts the car. “Not the relaxing trip I’d hoped for?”

“Just some asshole,” Katsuki mutters. “I’m fucking tired of the staring.”

“Your popularity has certainly increased,” Best Jeanist agrees, fingers tapping against the steering wheel. “For better and for worse.”

“How the fuck would any of it be *good*?” Katsuki demands in disbelief. “You think I don’t hear how people like to blame me for the fall of All Might? I’m surprised no-one’s taken a stab at me so far.”

It helped that she spent most of her time so far holed up in the Todoroki mansion. The increased animosity didn’t exactly *encourage* her to become a social butterfly.

“You’ll get more and more exposure with your new position.” Best Jeanist’s voice is calm, steady, and it strikes her that he had to be in his mid-thirties, that he’d been in the business for *years* now. “But

there are people on your side too. Pro Heroes in particular are aware of the fact that it isn't such a simple situation." Best Jeanist looks at her with green eyes through the mirror. "That's not to say you won't face a lot of resentment for other reasons. Some aren't too impressed with Endeavour's decision to bring a first-year student into the roster, so to say."

"How grand," Katsuki says flatly. "Real comforting."

"You need to be aware of the reality of it and you're not a fool," Best Jeanist says and Katsuki clenches her teeth. "You wouldn't much like it if I tried to hide it from you, would you?"

His eyes are knowing and Katsuki huffs, sinking deeper.

"I know," she admits grudgingly.

"Run me through what Endeavour has been teaching you."

Katsuki gnaws on that for a moment, wondering how to, in the nicest possible way, explain that he spent morning and evening wrenching her out like a dirty wet rag while beating her black and blue.

She's not interested in complaining – for all that she dislikes Endeavour his way of training is appealing to her.

"He's mostly been helping me work on my quirk," she says finally and it isn't a *lie*.

"Sensible," Best Jeanist says with a brush of his fingers over his fringe as they stop at a red light. "You're going to be up to your ears in it once you have your provisional licence so it's important that you understand the limit and strength of your quirk."

"s that what we're going to be doing?" Katsuki asks, forcing her shoulders down from their tense position with a brief grimace.

"Among others," Best Jeanist agrees. "You've gone through the laws of what you can and cannot do as Heroes, have you not?"

"Hero Studies 101," Katsuki says drily. "I've been reading up on it as well."

The laws were limiting in how choices could be made and even self-defence could lead to jail in the wrong circumstances. It was so fucking messed-up and Katsuki had read them back and forth until she

was fucking certain she had a good grasp on them.

Ironically quirkless people fell beneath the law in many cases – all of the ones structured against vigilantisms was focused on the illegal use of quirks. As if quirkless people weren't just as capable of being dangerous.

Hah.

“You're well read.”

“I fucking have to be,” Katsuki grouches. “Laws ain't the same and I'd rather not end up in jail.”

The thought of spending the rest of her life inside four tiny walls, be it a hospital or jail or otherwise, brings all sorts of dark thoughts and she'd rather just *not*.

She's sooner bite her tongue off and bleed to death in her lonesome.

“Well, we're going to be working through some of the practical applications of them, expectations, and the kind of work and choices you might be faced with.” Katsuki blinks at that. “Unlike the others who take the Provisional Hero Exam they're going back to school while you won't and due to your position you're going to have a lot of eyes on you.”

Katsuki mentally translates that into *there's a lot of people watching you and screwing up is not an option*.

“Are you hungry?” Best Jeanist asks suddenly. “It was a two hour trip, after all. I would be a bad Hero if I left my charge to starve.” Katsuki doesn't have time to answer because Best Jeanist makes a smooth turn and she gives him a dry look. “There's a famous shopping mall here with several restaurants. You didn't have much time to explore Tokyo last time, did you?”

Katsuki *did* meet up with Himiko but other than that she'd alternated between Best Jeanist's Agency, her hotel room and the short patrol routes around the immediate area.

“I guess not,” Katsuki says slowly.

“Then we'll do a bit of that before I take you back to my place.”

Katsuki twitches, head swivelling around to look at him.

“Your place?” she demands.

“I didn’t mention?” Best Jeanist looks completely innocent and Katsuki isn’t buying it for one fucking second. “It was decided that it is in your best interest to stay with someone who could keep an eye on you.”

Katsuki bares her teeth.

“The fuck is that supposed to mean?” she growls.

“It *means* that you’re in a precarious situation due to your associations.” Best Jeanist’s face turns grim and Katsuki stills, unease curling through her as she looks at him. “This was the best compromise I could come up with so, yes, you’re going to be staying in my apartment.”

Katsuki’s hackles rises but she forces the irritation down.

“You’re my responsibility, Touya,” Best Jeanist says. “Unfortunately for you that means that there’s limitations to what you can and cannot do.”

Katsuki weighs it because *fuck* she’d been looking forward to catch some time of her own but there’s consequences for her decisions, still, and just because Endeavour had pulled some strings doesn’t mean that it’s forgotten.

-

The outing is... okay.

Best Jeanist, inevitably, catches eyes as the Number Three Hero and Katsuki is just... not here for it. But the man is serious in keeping an eye on her and Katsuki hisses out in irritation, lingering within his sight as he’s halted for a third time after their lunch.

They’re in a large mall, stores all around them, the ceiling tall and modern with bright lights, an All Might fountain in bright gold with water spilling from his cupped palms in the central square where it towers high and intimidating.

She has no interest in getting into the middle of another conversation and seeks out the closest clothing shop before she glances back to Best Jeanist, jerking a thumb into it with a questioning hitch of her eyebrow, and he gives her an apologetic look and a nod.

It's a streetwear-style clothing shop Katsuki realises after stepping inside. There's a lot of oversized graphic tees of all kinds, baggy pants, skinny pants, tights in splashy colours, jackets in all kinds of interesting styles displayed on mannequins, brand names skating down arms and displayed broadly on the back of them.

She spots one or two pieces she's seen Mina wear on occasion as she makes her way down the tight rows, snagging up anything that caught her interest before finding a black high-collared jacket with a broad orange stripe on the back of it.

There's a rack of caps to her left and she snags the closest one before piling up everything on the counter and forking over the card to pay.

She's using her teeth to pull the price tag off the jacket as she ambles back outside and shrugs it on as she approaches Best Jeanist as he finally managed to pull himself away.

"People are uneasy with the fall of All Might," Best Jeanist says as she's shifts her wallet from her jeans to the inside pocket of her new jacket. "They're looking for reassurance."

"Doesn't it get annoying?" Katsuki wonders with a wrinkle of her nose. "It's not like All Might's been around Japan for all this time – he was in the States for a good while, wasn't he? And he was losing his power for a while now so you've been picking up the slack all this time."

She fishes the cap out of her plastic bag, giving it a brief study before cramming it on.

"Most aren't aware of it," Best Jeanist comments and it's hard to read exactly what he thinks of it. "He's done his best to hide it."

Katsuki is of the personal opinion that it's all a fucking mess and it's not at all fair to discredit other people to hail another but she doesn't voice it.

She thinks that, if anything, the top Heroes of today are very aware of it.

-

Best Jeanist's flat is...

Katsuki stares around the large open space, the modern furniture, the

impossibly large windows that *seem to out-crowd the actual walls*, and promptly decides that she dislikes it.

There's a broad flat style to the furniture, the living room and kitchen is all in the same open space, and there's an uncomfortably familiar feel to it with the tall chairs around the kitchen island.

Amélie's maternal grandparents had died before her birth and she had suffered through the visits to her paternal ones. There had been... opinions on her parent's marriage, a self-satisfied soft of air when the discussion of her deafness came up, a blame on *genes*.

She'd resented it, her mother had faced it with her chin raised, and her father had finally put his foot down when she reached her early teens.

The blank non-feeling space reminds her distinctively of them.

A home made up of too much money to have any real value to her.

The couch is in a lowered space in front of a large television and there's a weird sort of elegance to it with the lack of knick-knacks, the landscape painting stretching out to her right and the soft looking blankets folded up on the couch.

Best Jeanist bends down to remove his shoes, placing them aside, and Katsuki copies him after dropping her bag to the floor and hangs her new jacket on the coat stand before padding inside, trying not to feel horribly misplaced.

Housing in Tokyo is fucking expensive and they're high-up after an elevator ride, the windows overlooking the crowded streets below.

It's very different from Endeavour's traditional housing and Katsuki misses the normalcy of Mitsuki and Masaru's apartment.

Who needs this much space? Katsuki wonders sourly, looking around.

It rankles at her.

"Feel free to make yourself at home," Best Jeanist says with a flourish flick of his hand. "Your room is down the hall on your right, I've left it open for you, and the bathroom opposite it is entirely yours. You're welcome to all rooms but my own, just like I'll stay out of yours. We're two adults living together, after all."

Katsuki appreciates the sentiment, she *does*, but she'd rather have a crappy hotel room to slum in.

She keeps second guessing her compliance with it and struggles to stick to her rationalisation of it.

Is she listening because she has no actual choice and because Best Jeanist, actually, is her superior in the matter? Or could she have fucking *argued* to just pay for a hotel room of her own? Could he-

How much is she just *not* allowed to push under the, what, *probation* she's under? Because they're trying to force her up the ranks but at the same time she feels fucking chained because they can't have it both ways, *can they?*

She drags a hand through her hair and grimaces.

-

Katsuki finds a row of notifications when she turns her phone on that evening on the large flat expanse of the, frankly, ridiculously sized bed she'd found inside Best Jeanist's guest room.

It takes her a second to realise that she'd been tagged inside the *girl's chat* she'd mostly been ignoring and she opens it up, flicking up through it and then slowly scanning down as it pinged with more incoming messages, brow creasing.

She flips to the very end where Mina and See Through's enthusiastic exclamation points greets her, happy faces and rows of little figures that makes her snort, shifting and trying to find a vaguely comfortable position.

KATSUKI: Are you all changing up your costumes?

Katsuki pieces together the situation with the back and forth from the answering messages falling in no rational order.

Apparently they'd been given a second shot at redesigning their Hero Costumes as well as arranging for a winter-suited one in preparation for the colder weather.

It had brought up the suitability of Ponytail's for the late summer chill that had started creeping up and had spiralled with Round Cheek's contemplations of her own.

It's not a bad idea. Kids had ideas, not all of them were functional in reality, and Katsuki had made changes to her own when Endeavour had handed her the forms necessary for ordering one.

KATSUKI: Pros and cons of your current ones?

She types out the question and powers the screen off, rolling off and padding across the hall to brush her teeth before ducking out to the kitchen to grab herself a tall glass of cool water.

“Oyasumi,” Best Jeanist calls to her and she echoes the words a bit grudgingly as she closes the door, tugging her shirt off and sprawling down on her belly before pawing her phone close and turning it back on.

Froggy and See Through (who'd just gotten hers) were both happy with theirs. Minor adjustments, a solid concept already in place, and Katsuki puts those out of her mind.

Round Cheeks, from what Katsuki gathers together, wanted something more solid. She'd served her Internship with a Hero by the name Gunhead, who'd given her some advice, and she'd sent a picture of a sketch that Katsuki clicks, squinting as she studied it.

According to Round Cheeks herself the tightness of her suit was an error (and Katsuki tries *really* fucking hard not to linger on that fuck-up because who the *hell-*) and one she'd wanted to correct.

The new one kept the colour scheme but the black pants were thick and sturdy with a belt equipped with pouches not unlike Katsuki's own, the boots had been slimmed down to something less clunky and the armguards thickened with hardy metal, clearly designed to take a hit and give some power to her own which made sense, considering her quirk.

The sleeves had been shortened, fingerless gloves added, and a vest thrown over it – a jacket drawn beside it to indicate the change to her winter costume.

She writes a short note to Round Cheeks, asking if she was looking to add a weapon to it, and then goes to the next.

Katsuki notes an immediate theme – bulkier clothing, pouches added, knee- and elbow pads in various styles.

Punk had drawn up larger headphones, added amps on the shoulders

of the new jacket, and was looking to slim down the mechanics on her arms, removing the need for cords that could be yanked, and she'd written out a long list of notes for a panel-like thing to wrap around her wrist to free up her hands.

Which was... sensible as fuck.

Who put such important equipment on the back of their *hands* anyway? Kids, that's who.

Mina had gone down pretty much the same route with excited rambling on the coating the support department had made for her. The full body-suit had been ditched in favour of military style camo pants and she'd made adjustments for a chest armour of sorts with knee-pads not unlike the ones Katsuki favoured.

All of it to be coated in a protective layering to keep her quirk from eating away at it much the same as her bodysuit had been designed to do.

KATSUKI: Ponytail?

PONYTAIL: I... don't really have any ideas, Touya-san.

Katsuki stares at the message, stretching her arms slowly out until she was slumped out with her chin touching against the bedding, frowning.

Arguably, Ponytail's suit was sensible in one fucking way and in zero others. It had been designed to allow her to maximise her quirk but it also brought her attention that she didn't much enjoy, from what Katsuki understood, and didn't offer much of a protection at all.

She scrolls back up through the chat to re-read some of Ponytail's worries as she mulled it over.

KATSUKI: Does it have to be your front that's open?

MINA: !!!

MINA: I knew you'd have some ideas!!

SEE THROUGH: Touya-senpai to the rescue!!

There is a worrying amount of *hearts* all around and Katsuki stares at it, waiting for Ponytail to reply as the conversation derailed on screen.

A new message indicates that Ponytail had sent her an invite for a private chat and she opens it up.

PONYTAIL: It does not. What do you have in mind?

Katsuki glances towards the alarm clock.

It's nearing midnight but Best Jeanist had indicated that they didn't need to be in the office until after nine.

KATSUKI: Give me a day.

PONYTAIL: You don't have to do this, you know?

PONYTAIL: I don't want you to feel pressured into helping me.

Katsuki scowls at the screen.

KATSUKI: I need to find some fucking paper. And a pen.

And do some research, she thinks, but does not add, thinking of the book the girl carried around in a *modern fucking society*.

KATSUKI: One day.

She waits, thumbs hovering over the screen.

PONYTAIL: I'm looking forward to see what you have in mind then.

Chapter End Notes

Small interlude but you know, we dealt with Tooru, Uraraka was not happy with her suit, and I cannot imagine a world where someone like Yaomomo would actually find what she wears sensible in the long-run.

I felt morally obliged to deal with it.

And kids will make dumb decisions when it comes to their suits and I'm dead sure most of them would want to make adjustments. It takes time to find your style, the support department is there for a reason, they're learning more of their quirks and how to use them and what they need to optimize and yadda yadda.

It doesn't work in the manga world but I figure, what the hell, this story is getting out of hands anyway so might as well be through with it.

We have some exciting and long-awaited returns in the near future so strap in tight, my friends.

Many thanks for your amazing support, it's a wonder and a blessing and I am ever so happy to have you along for this ride <3

I'm artsy-death on tumblr if you're about there.

I hope you enjoyed!

Cruelty

Chapter Notes

Ponytail = Yaoyorozu

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Katsuki likes drawing.

She's not good at it, and she doubts that after thirty years there's anything to be done to change that, but she enjoys it all the same.

When she'd first woken up in this body the therapists they sent her to had all favoured giving her a pile of paper an endless amount of colourful pens to choose from.

In a world that had gone topsy-turvy she had favoured drawing the same blob-shaped cows over and over again.

Cows were normal, sturdy slow creatures munching on grass day out and day in. They were the same in her world and this world and they made sense when little else did around her.

She'd liked drawing them.

Her therapists had been confused, Mitsuki had sighed when she'd dragged her feet out with another bunch of cow pictures tucked under her arm, but they had all been briefly been displayed on the fridge and unless they had removed it there would still be one in a bright yellow grassy field beneath a single apple tree.

Katsuki shoves a ball of rice into her mouth, chewing absently as she tapped her pen against the paper with her left.

"You've been very focused this morning," Best Jeanist comments where he sits elegantly with one leg folded up over the other, orange juice poured into something that looked suspiciously like a champagne glass and with a hearty breakfast meal that had been delivered to him at the door at 6 am sharp. "A project, perhaps?"

Katsuki places her pen down.

"I know what I want to draw but I can't get it to do what I want," she admits a bit grudgingly. "And I can't half-ass it either."

There's a pile of tossed drawings on the floor of her room that needed to be dealt with and she's half-contemplating turning them into kindling.

But unlike Endeavour's house this one was sure to have a fire alarm and sprinkler system installed.

"No?" Best Jeanist's tone invites response.

Katsuki's mouth thins.

"It's a suit," she admits finally. "So – it needs the details, yeah? And she can clean it up herself, if she chooses to use it, so it's not like it needs to be *fancy* but—" She gestures to the tent-like blob on the paper and Best Jeanist leans forward, giving it a brief study.

"Maybe it's easier to draw the individual pieces?" he suggests.

"Maybe," Katsuki grumbles dubiously.

"Would you like some help?" Best Jeanist cuts his rough-bread sandwich, thinly layered with salmon and avocado slices, and pops one piece into his mouth. "If you describe it to me I can give a try and drawing something up."

Katsuki eyes him.

"It's still another two hours until we need to at the office and it's a short ride," he tells her, mouth twitching up and green eyes warm.

Disarmingly kind, that's her view on Best Jeanist and she doesn't understand his interest in her.

"I'll figure something out," she says shortly.

"Let me know if you change your mind."

Katsuki stares at the disaster of a drawing before her and clenches her fist around the chopsticks, mulishly shoving a piece of broccoli into her mouth.

-

Best Jeanist's office looks like she remembers it but there's greetings from people she absolutely do not remember meeting.

"We were all very happy to hear you were alright," a middle-aged

woman tells her, eyes shining clever behind a pair of square glasses, hair short and slicked messily back.

Her cheeks dimples, metal glinting in the middle of them, her suit crisp, neatly pressed, and *very* green.

"It was crazy!" Another woman, younger, exclaims in English as she drops a pile of books on Best Jeanist's desk. "No-one knew anything and Jean couldn't say anything! It was all very *hush hush*."

She's broad-shouldered and short, perfectly normal looking save for her hair which looked like it had been made from rubber candy where it spiralled down her head in red ropes with an odd shine against her brown skin.

"Red Vine," she greets with a grin and a thumb jerked towards her chest. "We didn't get much of a chance to talk last time. Michima over there doesn't have a Hero name but she's in charge of making sure this office doesn't go to the dogs so, really, she's the real Hero around here."

"I'm a lawyer," the green suited woman says with a shrug, popping a round lime green lollipop into her mouth. "And also quirkless."

Katsuki blinks at her, unsure what to make of the information, and after a moment she gets another dimpled smile and a wink.

There are more but Katsuki promptly forgets about them after Best Jeanist levels her a contemplative look and tells her that Michima and Red Vine were the ones she'd be working closest with during her stay.

-

Best Jeanist has her changing into loose training clothes and runs her through several different exercises, making notes on a pad as she failed to touch her fingers against her toes, grimacing as she twisted into the next one, careful to keep her breathing level.

"You've lost some of your flexibility," he comments as he drops down in an armchair that looks distinctively misplaced inside the gym and she sprawls out on her back nearly an hour later.

"I know," she admits with a huff.

It was inevitable with how extensive the scarring on her chest is.

“Have you considered making adjustments for it?” Best Jeanist wonders, leaning forward and clasping his hands together. “You are primarily a close combat specialist, even if your quirk gives you a good range, and you rely on quick twists over brutal force. You have the muscles to become a good grappler, however, if you chose to go down that route.”

“Not a fan of body contact if I can avoid it,” Katsuki says shortly.

“That is true but you also don’t react negatively to it during fighting as far as my observations can tell.” Best Jeanist taps his thumb thoughtfully. “You don’t hesitate to hook arms and legs around your opponent.”

It’s a fair observation – Katsuki feels far more in control of herself and her reactions when she’s in the middle of it.

“- with the right technique you could easily throw someone two or even three times your size.”

She pauses, turning to look at Best Jeanist.

“Caught your interest, did I?” He rises up, beckoning for her. “Let me show you what I mean.”

Katsuki slowly pulls herself to her feet, shifting as she eyes him.

“Spread your legs, arms up.”

Katsuki would very much rather *not* but the prospect of being able to bodyslam Endeavour into the mat is... *enticing*.

Best Jeanist studies her form, giving her foot a brief nudge with his own.

“Good.”

His arm draws behind him and Katsuki follows it instinctively.

“My apologies for this.”

Katsuki faintly registers the words.

And then a palm is twisting down towards her, *towards her chest*, and her pupils dilates into pinpricks before the world slips right under her.

Katsuki jerks, or tries to, but her body is pinned flat against the floor, on her belly, chest heaving and sweat dripping from her palms.

Her shirt is sticky against her back, a strange ringing noise in her ear and panic clawing for control.

The world is fluctuating around her, her throat is raw, and there are hands around her wrists, keeping them held hard against her back, careful but firm.

There is a voice. Speaking. Low and calm above the ringing and Katsuki twitches her fingers, forcing herself to seal off the nitroglycerine dripping from them, and there's an encouraging *good, just like that, you're safe, no-one can hurt you.*

Katsuki's body aches.

She doesn't know what happened.

The world flickers and dances, layering strangely, and she makes a low noise of confusion, close to a whine, pressing her forehead against the *mat/concrete/grass* as nausea crawls through her.

"Can you bring – yes, thank you–"

Her left wrist is gently grasped by unfamiliar fingers and she flinches, tensing up, but a cool cloth presses against her palm, wiping the sweet smelling sweat off them, careful to get the creases of her fingers, and then it's shifted to do the same to her other hand.

"Katsuki–" Best Jeanist's voice wraps strange around her name. "Your shirt is drenched in nitroglycerin. Do I have your permission to get you out of it?"

"What–" she gasps. "What the *fuck*–"

"In a moment," he interrupts her and her muscles coils but she's tired, exhausted in both mind and body, and she doesn't understand what's going on. "Please, trust me. I have Juniper – Red Vine – and Michima here if you're more comfortable with them helping you."

The hands around her wrists slowly eases off and her muscles aches in protest.

"*Fuck off,*" Katsuki rasps. "*Don't fucking touch me.*"

Katsuki bites down on the inside of her cheek until she tastes blood as

she forces her trembling body off the floor.

-

“You dissociated,” Best Jeanist explains in the aftermath. “I didn’t expect it to be quite so... severe.”

No one ever does.

Katsuki doesn’t remember anything.

There’s an entire blank slate between Best Jeanist’s hand coming towards her and her waking up with her face pressed against the floor.

“I apologize for the way I went about it, and I am truly sorry, but you’re not doing as well as you think and I cannot, in good conscience, allow you to keep shoving it down and ignoring it. A trigger at the wrong point of time, in the wrong situation, could very well mean death. I took a gamble from the reports and upon studying the way All For One and Shigaraki Tomura both fight and, well.”

He gestures.

Katsuki flinches and then clenches her fists and shoves them into her lap, hating herself for it.

“You went through something traumatic,” Best Jeanist stresses. “And you lost your support network following that. It’s normal to not be okay after that, I would have been more surprised if you weren’t. But you’re not coping by ignoring the repercussions of it.”

“You.” Katsuki’s voice rasps low and she thinks that – she must have been screaming, shouting, *something*, but she doesn’t *know*.
“Deliberately triggered me.”

“I did,” Best Jeanist admits grimly and she raises her head to meet his eyes. “And it’s fine if you hate me for it – more than fine. It was cruel of me.”

Katsuki hadn’t even known it *could* be a trigger.

Stupid, she thinks. *I’m so fucking-*

“I don’t think you’re aware of it but you’re in the habit of *pausing*, I suppose.” Best Jeanist tilts his head. “I tried to get your attention for a good minute last night during dinner and when you finally responded it was with a jerk and sharp irritation. It’s impacting you in your daily

life, whether you're aware of it or not."

It's not as if Katsuki is *blind* to it but she'd done this song and dance before – she'd thought she was handling it, by ignoring it, learning to cope with it.

It hurts. She's exhausted. She's confused. She doesn't like the gap in her memories.

She doesn't like the way Best Jeanist is looking at her.

-

Katsuki doesn't eat dinner that night.

She goes straight to bed, turns her headphones of max to drown out all sound, and curls up in a bed that isn't hers.

She's wired tense.

She wants to hurt something.

There is nothing to hurt.

She jolts when her phone buzzes in her pocket and remembers, with something thick and heavy in her chest, that she'd promised to get back to Ponytail with the sketch but instead-

Instead she'd spent the entire afternoon doing fucking *nothing*.

It's no wonder Masaru and-

The phone collides with the wall, breaking and shattering without noise, and she stares at the broken pieces as she slowly slumps back down before twisting around to bury her face in the closest pillow.

-

Best Jeanist says little on the trip to the train station and Katsuki spends the entire ride to the staring out the window.

Everything is twisting up inside of her, her thoughts jagged and confused and messy.

-

She spends the trip home drawing, desperate to think of anything but

how absolutely *wrong* she is.

-

Katsuki asks for Shouto's number from Fuyumi, texts him to ask for Mina's, and sends a short text.

MINA: You broke your phone??

MINA: How!?

Katsuki stares at the messages.

-

The idea Katsuki, finally, sends Ponytail is messy with too many words and explanations crammed onto the paper, violently erased at points to be drawn over it.

But she *tries*.

She details out the cape that would allow her suit design to allow for an open back styled sweater while keeping her warm. There is no point to keep the short skirt thing so she'd detailed out pants knee-pads, elbow pads – things that should be standard with all Hero suits.

The glasses had taken some research but there *were* already smart glasses that could be used to upload information onto and if Ponytail could find a way, with the help of the support department, to rework it she'd skip the step of having to pull up a fucking *book* in the middle of battle.

Even better if she could get it to scan through things in front of her – Katsuki had detailed out as much of what she understood of what was already available, drawing from her old college education and spare time studying and mashed it together into a rough base of *what could be*.

It looks about as messy as Katsuki feels but she sends it off anyway.

Motion registers and she turns her head as the door opens just a bit and she belatedly reaches up to draw her headphones from her ears as Fuyumi peers inside, her eyes catching the last of the sentence from the shaping of her lips.

"Just tired," she mutters in response to the worry.

Fuyumi hums, clearly not buying it but willing not to press as she tilts her head.

“I’ll tell him you’re feeling sick.”

Endeavour had been the last thing on her mind and Katsuki grimaces.

“Thanks.”

She drags her hand over her eyes and slumps back into the bed as Fuyumi ducks back out.

But not ten minutes later her door opens again and there’s a rustle, a clink of bottles, and her bed dipping.

She twitches, lifting her arm as Fuyumi settled down amidst a small gathering of nail polish.

She’d taken the time to change into shorts and a thick comfy hoodie that pools on her – clearly Natsuo’s by the college name proudly displayed on the front of it.

Hair in a messy bun and soft socks on her feet - it’s a relaxing, soft kind of look that suits her.

“What do you think?” Fuyumi holds up two bottles; one pink, the other a mellow yellow.

Katsuki blinks.

“Yellow,” she answers eventually.

The pink is put down.

“Do you mind if I turn on some music?”

Katsuki rarely, if ever, listens to music. But she shakes her head and Fuyumi draws her phone from her pocket, fiddling around a bit before a soft pop song lowered smooth into the background.

It’s not that Katsuki dislikes music – she finds it fascinating, on some level, but any constant noise tends to leave her with a headache.

She still habitually turns the sound completely off when watching movies, preferring captions to her videos when it was available.

Fuyumi hums, mouthing along with the chorus, and Katsuki finds

herself watching her, studying the soft shape of her face, the way her fingers grasped at the brush, stroking carefully but with clear familiarity.

“You know you can always talk to me.” Fuyumi doesn’t look at her, wiggling her toes as they were left to dry after a second coating. “I know your stay here isn’t your choice but that doesn’t mean you need to handle everything on your own.”

Katsuki huffs tiredly.

“Am I that transparent?”

“Maybe I’m just good at reading people.”

She’d lied to Mina because for all that she loves her friend she’s not comfortable leaving it to a fifteen (or sixteen now – Katsuki had missed her birthday, hadn’t she?) year old to manage her mental health.

There’s a line she has to draw somewhere.

“Best Jeanist... did something that deliberately, on his part, hurt me,” she gets out and Fuyumi’s head shoots up, her gaze sharp. “I think he meant well.” It sounds like a terrible excuse. “*Genuinely*,” she presses. “But I didn’t like it even if it made me aware of something that needs to be dealt with.”

Because she’s dissociated so badly that she didn’t have as much as a blurry image to rely on to scramble together what had happened.

Katsuki loathes the feeling of taking one step forward and three steps back.

First with Midnight and now with Best Jeanist.

“Did he offer to help you with it?” Fuyumi asks, grey eyes studying her.

“He did,” Katsuki admits with a grimace. “But how the fuck am I supposed to trust him when he went and-“ She gives a sharp jerk of her hand, frustration burning hot beneath her skin.

“It’s not easy having your trust betrayed,” Fuyumi murmurs and for a second the cadence of her voice reminds Katsuki of Dabi. “You don’t have to forgive him for it. But if you genuinely believe he had good

intentions at heart it might be worth giving him another chance in helping you with it if it's something that truly bothers you, which it seems to."

Katsuki turns her head to look at her.

"If it doesn't work out, just call me and I'll pick you up." Fuyumi smiles at her and there's an empathetic understanding there. "My father isn't unreasonable. If you don't want to work with Best Jeanist he will, at the very least, hear you out. He doesn't work well with others either so I doubt it's an issue he'll press."

Katsuki mulls it over as Fuyumi deems the coating on her fingers finally dry.

"Can I paint your nails, Katsuki-chan?"

A bottle of purple nail polish is held up with a little wiggle.

-

It's past midnight when Katsuki drops down on the porch, cupping her palm around a black cigarette and letting out a carefully controlled popping until it snagged alight and she draws in, feeling the smoke curl down her lungs and fill them up, eyes closing.

"I see Fuyumi got her hands on you." Endeavour's voice is rough and Katsuki glances back to find him standing in the doorway, dark smudges beneath his eyes and wearing loose sleeping pants and a t-shirt, hair still wet. "She's always been too soft."

Katsuki breathes the smoke out through the corner of her mouth before drawing the cigarette from her lips.

"She's better than most," she says and she means it. "You should be thankful any of your children chose to willingly stick around."

Endeavour's gaze rests heavily on her for a moment before he scoffs.

"Best Jeanist called me. He expressed *concern*." Endeavour's mouth twists around the word as if tasting something foul.

"And he thought *you* were the person to bring it to?" Katsuki drawls mockingly. "Shows how much he knows."

"Watch your words, girl."

“Try me, *old man*.”

His palm collides against the wood beside him and Katsuki coils, eyes narrowing.

“Don’t go picking fights you can’t win.”

“Fuck off.” She bares her teeth. “Why are you even *here*?”

“Call it a level interest.” Endeavour slowly eases back, hand falling back at his side as he shifted to lean against the wooden frame. “I’ve worked with Best Jeanist on several occasions – he *prides* himself on working with troubled *teenagers*.” It’s a dig at her but Katsuki draws another lungful of smokes and forces herself not to rise to the bait. “I expected a... different... outcome.”

“Like what?” Katsuki grumbles. “Me skipping home all happy and sparkling?”

“Don’t be deliberately obtuse.”

“What the fuck do you want me to say then?” Katsuki demands in frustration. “Do you want me to tell you Best Jeanist isn’t some kind of perfect Hero? Because news flash! Slapping a Hero title to someone makes them a good fucking person.”

“Not even All Might?”

The strange tone registers but Katsuki isn’t in a mind to *care*.

“Not even fucking All Might,” she affirms with a growl.

Endeavour stands half-cast in shadow and moonlight, scar vivid on his face, turquoise eyes studying her intently, and Katsuki snuffs out the butt of the cigarette as the heat started licking at her fingers.

“I don’t get your fucking obsession with Heroes and ranking – it’s just shitty media attention turned to the fucking max. Who puts that much value to a single person and doesn’t expect it to end up a fucking mess I don’t know. All Might screwed up. *Society* screwed up.”

She stands up, stepping closer to him, and Endeavour’s eyes remain watchful.

“You have his number, don’t you? I want it.”

“You want his number.” There’s a threading of amusement in his

voice. "What makes you think I'll give it to you?"

"I need someone to fucking yell at." Katsuki bares her teeth. "It's either going to be you or him."

"I'll consider it," Endeavour's mouth curls up and Katsuki stares at him because *fuck* that's horribly familiar. "Go to bed, we train early tomorrow."

Chapter End Notes

You should never, ever, trigger someone deliberately - it's bad.
But there are... *circumstances*.

Still bad though.

All Might is nearing, are you guys as excited as I am? Like - it has been a looong time coming now but there's been a lot going on, a lot of adjustments, and changes, and it needed to be sorted through but it's so close now I can almost *feel it*.

I think we're some three or five chapters away from the Provisional Hero Exam as well? Don't quote me on that though. My original plan would have had us there like two chapters ago and yet here we are!

Katsuki is bonding with the Todoroki fam after some trauma.

So it goes.

Been reading and rereading your comments and if I could squish you all up I would. I've been a bit slow in responding but school has picked up and between reading and writing this I've been busy trying to not allow my brain to become goo. But I always get back to you! Rest assured.

You can find me on tumblr as artsy-death and this has been chapter 4...5 of In The End.

I hope you enjoyed!

Solutions

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Ochako taps her thumb thoughtfully against the phone in her hand, mindful to keep her pinkie away from it least she accidentally activated her quirk. She doesn't have the funds to replace it – her parents had invested money to make sure she had a means to contact them whilst living on her own.

Some of the financial burden had eased with the change to dormlife but she's constantly aware of the fact that her parents are working hard to give her this chance.

She turns her head up, feeling the wind flutter around her, the distant sound of voices through the glass windows tall behind her where the rest of her classmates had gathered up after dinner to spend some time together. One or two might have trickled up but Ochako had been surprised how easily they all fit together.

Maybe it's because Baku-

But, no, she knows that's unfair and she knows that it's not *her* name, that she'd chosen the name *Touya Katsuki*, that everything they'd known about her was a *lie* and now Deku-

Deku hadn't returned to class.

She knows that Iida is probably right, that he needs *time*, but it feels like a heavy weight against her heart because Deku had been hurting in a way that she'd never seen before and she struggles to understand the complicated nature of it all.

She had kept quiet when Deku spoke about Kacchan, unsure what to make of it but recognising the idolisation and warmth in his eyes when he spoke of his childhood friend. That the girl had been nothing like he described, off-putting and anti-social, hadn't deterred it in the least and Ochako had been hesitant where to place herself in it all because Touya had done nothing to encourage it, had actually done everything in her power to *discourage* it.

A part of Ochako is resentful because Deku doesn't deserve this upon everything else going on.

But she knows – she *knows* that she can't blame Touya for her existence. The girl, *woman*, really, had gone out of her way to help Ochako even at her worst and it had been felt good to face her down at the Sports Festival because Touya hadn't held back even when the whispers and looks started up around them.

It's strange to come to terms with that the scowling fierce visage she'd come to know might be more intimately aware of the struggles that women faced in society than her appearance first gave impression of.

That she knew what it was like to be underestimated.

Perhaps it's because of that she hesitates even as the need to know is almost overwhelming because she doesn't know how to help Deku if she doesn't understand just what Kacchan and Deku had *been*.

"I have the memories of your Kacchan and I remember – it wasn't your fault."

Deku had been quiet on the exact nature of why Kacchan had disappeared out of his life but there's clearly more going on that Ochako is privy to.

But is it really right to push the responsibility on Touya? A woman who had *been murdered*?

Ochako bites her lip.

You can ask, she encourages herself. *Worst come to worst she'll just say no.*

And yet the phone feels impossibly heavy in her hand, the number on the small screen glowing green in the darkening summer evening.

-

"It's a cape," Mina says confidently, peering down at the screen in Yaomomo's hands. "Look! She even drew a winter version of it – that little scribble is clearly fur." She pokes at said white little scribble against the black blob.

Tooru squints at the lettering beside it but she'd seen better handwriting from her five-year-old cousin.

It is a bit sad, honestly.

"A cape sounds cool," she says enthusiastically, trying to picture it.

“Maybe you can make the winter version longer? And if you do, like, a thick vest like thing with an open back you *should* be able to stay mostly warm. I think. Maybe add a strap so you can draw the cape tight when you’re not using it?”

“Oh!” Yaomomo hastily puts the phone aside and reaches for her tablet and Tooru takes the chance to snatch the phone up, zooming in on the googles Touya had drawn beside it. “That’s a really good idea, Hagakure-san!”

“*Tooru-chan*,” she chides, tilting her head, but, no, the scribbling didn’t look much better side-ways. “We’re living together! No need for that formality. We’ve been calling you Yaomomo for ages now.”

“She’s right,” Kyoka pipes up from where she’d sprawled out on her back on Yaomomo’s bed with a comic. “You can all call me by my first name.”

“Agreed, *kero*,” Tsuyu intones a bit cheekily considering she’d long since insisted they’d call her Tsuyu-chan.

Tsu-chan had been reserved for Ochako with the kind of silent agreement that had resulted in many exchanged looks between them.

Tooru glances towards the noticeably silent girl and doesn’t hide a grimace because there’s really no point to it.

Not like anyone can see it anyway.

She doesn’t know if Ochako fancies Midoriya or Tsuyu, perhaps it’s a bit of both, perhaps none at all, but the absence of Midoriya had clearly hit her hard. She’d overheard Iida, in a loud whisper, tell Ochako that Midoriya needed *time* but Ochako’s fake smiles were becoming downright miserable to behold.

But he had All Might looking after him so it couldn’t be all bad, could it? The former Symbol of Peace clearly cared for Midoriya, it was easy to tell for anyone with eyes and ears, one just needed to spend two minutes in the same room as the two.

All Might made the worst liar, truly. Although his nervousness was kind of adorable to behold.

Or had been.

His new form wasn’t really *adorable*. Horrifying and a bit sad, if Tooru

is completely honest with herself. It was just... he was clearly trying to hold up this weird cheerful mask of heroics but then he'd turn around to cough up a worrying amount of blood and his body is just-

A part of her wants to just, force him down into the closest bed and tell him to get some damn rest because he deserves it.

But the thought of saying those words to *All Might* chokes in her throat.

"What do you think?" Tooru stretches over, shoving the phone beneath the nose of the other girl who gives a startled little motion, blinking at the bright light of the screen. "I'm trying to understand what she wrote about the goggles here but-"

"It's smart goggles," Ochako blurts out, eyebrows rising up, and Tooru quiets, head tilting in interest as Ochako bent closer to peer at the small chicken scrawl. "Look - she made a note here referencing those new fancy ones that uses a voice activated search engine." A strange look flitters across her face before her mouth twitches. "She makes a long despairing note about the use of a book on a battle field but she wants you to update the information from your book into the goggles I think?"

"You can actually read it?" Tooru draws the phone closer, but, no, still the same mystifying mess of tiny scrawls.

"Deku has even worse handwriting," Ochako confides, touching all fingers but her thumbs together.

"It would help a lot," Yaomomo muses. "But I don't know if there's actual technology for it yet..."

"Touya-san clearly believes it's possible. There's a lot of technical scrawls that I don't really understand beneath it but I can write it down if you want? Maybe the support department can make something out of it."

"That would be a great help, Ura-" Yaomomo ducks her head with a shy dusting of pink across her cheeks when she gets several looks levelled upon her. "O-I mean Ochako-chan."

Tooru sighs in fond amusement.

It's really how unfair how effortlessly *pretty* Yaomomo makes something like embarrassment.

“I can help!” Tsuyu volunteers, hands pressing down against the floor as she rose up, taking her own tablet with her, and Ochako gives her a smile that is just slightly strained.

But, her eyes are warm, Tooru thinks, as Tsuyu presses up against her shoulder without reservation.

A chin drops onto her shoulder, startling her, and a low sigh comes from Mina near her ear, golden eyes lingering guiltily on the brown haired girl.

Tooru sneaks out a hand to catch Mina’s into the warmth of hers with a squeeze.

-

“I want to make a donation.”

The lady on the other side of the desk looks up from the paper she’d been reading and Katsuki tries to arrange her face into something less... glaring.

The sheer *noise* of the children around her is giving her vivid flashbacks to her second turn at middle school. Mitsuki and Masaru had made allowances for her but there was no escaping it and if there’s anything Katsuki had considered absolutely hellish it had been being stuck surrounded by children whose attempt at bullying her had been so pitiful that she hadn’t known what to do with herself.

Was it moral to slug some poor nine-year-old who didn’t know better? Generally she’d had the older kids going after her but there had been one or two unfortunate souls who’d been younger than her body and yet found themselves at the wrong end of her short temper.

It is a wonder people allowed her out the door, really.

“That’s wonderful!” The lady says with a smile that is just a pinch too tight to be anything genuine and Katsuki thinks; *tired* and *fuckin’ stressed*. “We are always looking for more funds.” She reaches beneath the counter. “We have different activities you can make a donation for. There are trips, arrangements for-“

“Can I donate to all of it?” Katsuki places one arm on the desk, leaning forward to peer at the leaflet as the lady placed it down, the hand smoothing it out pausing.

Katsuki had picked this particular orphanage because it geared itself towards taking in children who had lost their parents in attacks between Heroes and Villains that had gone off the rails.

The kind that people would rather just ignore the existence of because Heroes were good and the loss of lives weren't supposed to be part of the *game*.

"All of it?" The lady sounds torn between scepticism and careful hope, eyes studying her. "You're that boy who was kidnapped from U.A. aren't you? The one All Might-"

"Yeah," Katsuki interrupts and then forces down a grimace, straightening up and meeting her gaze. "I am here to make a donation on the behalf of Endeavour's Hero Agency." Katsuki tastes the words carefully. "It is our belief that for a better future we need to invest in the younger generation and to level the field for those who has less opportunities, so to say." The words feels clumsy despite her practicing them in front of the mirror and Katsuki struggles to not let it show as she bows her head. "There will always be causalities and Endeavour's Hero Agency recognises that though there has never been ill-intent we still contribute to a system that doesn't do enough for those who suffer loss."

It's a risky choice of words and Katsuki knows it but for *fucks sake* there has to be something like accountability in this farce.

If she so has to force it.

"I- I don't know what to say."

"We wish to contribute to the activities but also to make a donation of 8 000 000 yen." Katsuki straightens up. "We are not doing this for exposure." Katsuki knows it will get out anyway, she's counting on it, but she can still press it – can play the fucking *role* of a humble donation. "All you need to say is yes."

"You mean it." The lady sounds faint and Katsuki is careful not to twitch as the other rises up, hands landing flat against the desk. "Of course – I mean, we'd be *honoured* to accept a donation from the Number One Hero himself!" Her eyes are bright, her loud voice catches the attention of a couple of curious children and a male worker who gazes sharp towards them. "Why don't we take this to my private office-"

"Touya Katsuki," Katsuki supplies politely as she shifts.

"Touya-san," the lady agrees, her voice strengthening as she turned towards the other worker. "Amino-san, please make sure we are not disturbed."

"Of course." The man dips his head politely at them both, hustling a small child along from where she'd pinned Katsuki in place with far too wide and hollow eyes.

Katsuki keeps her stride careful, confident, trying not to show just how much the starch white button-up is making her itch as the door closes behind them.

-

Setting up donations takes up more time than Katsuki had originally taken into account. Apparently one couldn't just waltz in, slap down a pile of money, and waltz out. There were papers to be filled out and she'd been hustled into taking photos with the children at the orphanage where she'd done her level best to not look like she itched to slap their sticky little fingers away from her.

She's not entirely sure she'd done a very good job at it.

The lady – who Katsuki eventually slotted as *Chatty* – had taken great pride in showing her around the orphanage, introducing her to far more children than Katsuki wanted anything to do with *ever again*, and somehow coerced her into reading a short story to a gathering of inquisitive children.

The small hollow eyed girl had even climbed her fucking *lap* as she painstakingly worked her way through something called *Bunny Hop Hop*.

More photos had been taken and Katsuki knows it's good fucking publicity whenever the fuck it gets out, but she *doesn't like being touched*.

She's directly associated to Endeavour, her name is on people's lips, she can use it and she fucking *will* but hell if she isn't craving a scalding hot shower because her skin fucking *burns*. It's a feeling that won't go away, crawling uncomfortably and making her scowl far more fiercely than the fast food worker likely deserved.

But at least she gets her food with haste and she snags the bag along, making her way to a decently large park, leaving the path to find a spot of privacy amidst the thick trees and bushes.

She removes her headphones and – there’s just a very distant noise of laughing children alongside the cry of the cicadas, the call of the birds above her, and the soft whooshing of cars passing by far away from her.

She slumps against the large cherry tree and allows herself to breathe out as she tugs at her tie, head tipping back against the hard wood as sun reached through the crowns of the trees to cast a warm glow against her.

“You look like you’ve had a long busy day.” The voice is distinctively familiar in a way that makes her shoulder draw tense and Katsuki’s eyes snaps open, head jerking up to find a man leaning against a tree opposite her.

A high-collared jacket, short, not the long coat she’d grown accustomed to, simple jeans, a cap pulled low to shadow his brown eyes.

“The fuck are you doing here?” Katsuki blurts out.

“Is that really the way to greet an old friend?” Compress’s mouth isn’t visible but Katsuki has the distinct feeling the asshole is smiling at her. “I was doing business, if you will, but then I saw you and I couldn’t quite help myself. An *orphanage*? And working with the Number One Hero himself? You’re really climbing up in the world, aren’t you? Making new *waves*.”

“Are you being fucking sarcastic or just dense?” she asks flatly.

“Just a tad mocking,” Compress admits easily, taking a step towards her, and Katsuki bares her teeth. “Don’t worry – for now Tomura is quite content to let you play pretend at this little farce of Heroism. He wants you to join on your own accord and he’s quite certain you’ll come around to it, sooner or later. I am merely here as a... concerned acquaintance.”

“Sure you are,” Katsuki grumbles but reluctantly eases back, eyeing him. “So you want what – a fucking *chit chat*? Information? Gotta tell you Endeavour is the most boring broody fucker and I’m not in the habit of trading gossip.”

Compress hums, folding down in the grass, and it’s fucking *strange* to see him out of his perfectly neat button-ups and slacks.

In contrast she’s dressed in a button-up that was ridiculously

expensive with a purple tie and slacks that had been carefully fitted to her.

What is this, a fucking role reversal?

“Would you believe me if I told you I’m genuinely curious to see how you’re doing?” Compress asks, hand tugging the bill of his hat just an inch higher to reveal more of his eyes. “You made an impression on me, I admit. You make a curious case of eccentrics.”

Katsuki stares at him and then huffs, reaching for her bag for food and prying it open. She pulls out one of the extra burgers and throws it to him and he catches it with an easy movement, a curious gleam in his eyes.

“Trying to get a good look at my face?”

“I couldn’t care less,” Katsuki says flatly. “Feel free to eat with your back towards me if you’re that fucking self-conscious.”

“See, that’s why I like you.” Compress reaches up and tugs down the zipper down and Katsuki doesn’t bother with as much as a cursory glance as she focuses on her own food, prying the wrapper off. “Your zero tolerance for bullshit is a breath of fresh air.”

“Thanks,” Katsuki says dryly before taking a large bite of her burger, chewing it through as Compress took a much smaller bite of his, looking fairly relaxed, almost content to share this small meal with her.

It’s fucking *bizarre*.

“You’re not going to ask how they’re doing?” Compress asks after Katsuki had worked her way through one burger and started on her next while he’d only made his way through half of his.

“If you want to tell me that’s on you.” Katsuki licks some ketchup from the corner of her lip. “I’m not going to pretend things aren’t fucking complicated as they are now.”

Compress’s eyes dips towards her wrist where Katsuki had tugged the sleeves up, revealing the beaded bracelet Himiko had gifted her with.

“But you care,” he notes and Katsuki isn’t about to deny it. “Perhaps it’s a good thing, perhaps it’s not, I’m not interested in getting in the middle of things. I have my reservations about the situation but from

what I understand from Toga-chan you're the one responsible for leaving that *charming* scar on Endeavour's face and making sure they both came back to us and for that I am grateful."

Katsuki pauses at that, brow furrowing as she looks at him.

Shigaraki came back for Himiko and Dabi, she has a blurry picture of shouted concern for Kurogiri with jagged black *things* jutting bizarrely out of his back, and she supposes that it makes sense that even for someone as level and carefully distant as Compress there is a measure of concern for a group of people he'd gotten himself tangled with.

How much she can't say but he's *thanking her* and he'd gone out of his way to fucking *check-up on her*?

"You made an impression on me."

Katsuki really don't know what to feel about it.

Her stay with the League of Villains hadn't been a willing thing. She had been kidnapped, threatened and used in a twisted attempt to raze the Hero Society to the ground. They had succeeded to press All Might to use up the last flickering power he had access to and in the aftermath she'd been shouldered with a considerate amount of the blame.

Her entire fucking *life* had been turned on the head because of them.

She touches her fingers against the beaded bracelet on her wrist.

Katsuki is a selfish person, but so is Dabi and Himiko and the rest of the League of Villains. An odd gathering of people who had suffered at the hands of society in one way or the other and who wanted *revenge* on it.

She thinks of Best Jeanist's hand twisting out towards her, of the heavy eyes of Endeavour, and the judgement levelled upon her by All Might.

And she thinks of Dabi whose back is more scars than skin.

"I didn't do it for you."

"That doesn't change the outcome," Compress remarks and her lips thin. "Whether you like it or not you're playing on two sides right now and in the end you're going to have to make a decision."

Katsuki raises her head, meeting the brown of his eyes.

“Are you ready to pay the price, *Touya-san*?”

She bares her teeth. “I’m playing to *win*.”

Compress levels her with a long look. “I don’t know if you’re truly that naïve or arrogant to believe that but the world is far more complicated than you want it to be.”

Katsuki bites down on the words that want out in response, her lungs expanding before she breathed out with a harsh hiss and turned her head away.

“I think you know,” Compress says as he scrunches the wrapper together and zips up his jacket. “How is staying with the new Number One Hero anyway?” He mercifully changes the subject. “You looked healthier in our care.”

There are bruises on her wrists but it’s the only visible tell from Endeavour’s rough handling during their morning training and Katsuki *does not* look down because she’d made doubly sure in the mirror that morning.

Had covered up the dark marks on her neck with carefully applied make-up before venturing out.

She gives him a look.

“You cover it well but from the way you’re moving I’m guessing at least one cracked rib.” He gives her a critical look. “Your voice is also raspier than usual and you’re avoiding putting your full weight on your left leg.”

Katsuki’s fingers twitches but ultimately she huffs, drawing her fingers through her hair.

“It’s nothing I can’t take.”

“You’ll have to excuse me if I don’t take you at face value considering your fetish for scars,” Compress says mildly.

“*Fetish?*” Katsuki repeats, offended.

“It’s a sexual thing, is it not?” Compress’s eyes glitter with amusement. “Awfully thin walls in that bar and seeing both Dabi and you with a limp was quite the blatant tell.” He tugs at his hat. “I was quite

surprised it went both ways but he does have a soft spot for you.”

Katsuki feels warmth creep up her cheeks and ears, scowling as she ducked her head.

“It’s nothing to be ashamed of, though I admit some relief to find out about the real you. I did have some concerns about Dabi’s morality at first. But! Things cleared up.” He spreads his hands out, always with that strangely theatrical undertone, even now in this get-up.

Katsuki tries not to think too hard on the fact that Compress, of all fucking people, was openly admitting to having been *concerned* about her.

"Fuck off," she says sourly. "And I'm handling it so keep your nose out of it."

Compress hums.

-

Katsuki tugs down on the strings of her hoodie, feeling the fabric draw against her face until only her nose and eyes are visible as she stares out over the water of the small lake.

“They’re all okay.”

Compress had left her with a bottle of vodka he’d pulled from his bag in exchange for the food and Katsuki isn’t in a position to turn down free alcohol. Her body is still too young and her face plastered on too many screen to want to risk something stupid like *a fake ID*.

Her fingers brushes against the cool glass of the bottle, wrapping around its neck with a twist to snap it open and unscrewing it with a flick of her fingers.

“Toga-chan has been in a bit of a mood, admittedly, and Dabi spends most of his time making sure she doesn’t do something reckless. We’re playing it safe at the moment, nothing terribly exciting.”

She uses to fingers to pull down the fabric over her mouth and then lifts it up, grimacing at the first splash of bitter liquid against her tongue but forcing down mouthful after mouthful.

“Tomura made an attempt at cooking – it was a disaster and Twice was the only one who made a valiant attempt at getting through it. He hasn’t

been deterred, however, and Dabi went out of his way to pick up a cookbook after one too many charcoal disasters. He's slowly getting better and I dare say it's been a good distraction for him."

She stops with a cough, feeling the burn, the strange warmth that floods through her, contrasting against the persistent cold.

"I am not sure what kind of cooking you've been indulging in but he's rather convinced lemons are a key element to all recipes which made for an interesting batch of pancakes, I admit. He spent an afternoon with Toga-chan and Twice upgrading the chapters in the cookbook to better adapt to this and I suspect we're better off just getting used to it at this point-"

Katsuki swallows against the gag, feeling her insides lurch in protest but stubbornly keeping it down, forcing her body to process it as she places the half-empty bottle aside and tugs her shoes off, shucking them aside before flopping down on her back with a throb of her sprained foot.

She stares up at the moon, shining bright above the tree tops, feeling the familiar numbness of the alcohol to settle like a mockery to drown out the world around her until all her worries disappeared into its cottony false comfort.

"Whoever said alcohol isn't a solution can fuck themselves," Katsuki tells the moon. "... And brush up on their fucking chemistry."

Chapter End Notes

So, I've noted that some of you are surprised that Endeavour doesn't misgender her and after some messages on tumblr I figure I'd clear some things up:

To Endeavour there is *no point* in misgendering her. Put aside the fact that he, rather obsessively, wants to be the Number One Hero (which demands some sort of... behaviour) I still cannot rationalize why he'd *care*.

Endeavour is all about strength - he faults his children for not measuring up to his standards but outside that he doesn't go out of his way to antagonize them. He *rationalizes* his treatment of them to keep his view on him being a good Hero.

In Katsuki's case he also makes a point out of it which we'll explore further because those two are all about butting heads.

I hope that clears it up?

That said I also got a question on the Midoriya situation and we'll absolutely handle it, I promise. No stone left unturned!

On that note we're not leaving class 1-A behind in this fic. We'll be dipping in and out with them and they're obviously coming back with the exam that's inching closer. I have some surprise POVs planned for the future to clear things out a bit because Katsuki is... Katsuki. Unreliable narrator that one.

Sending all my love - thank you for making this a joy to write and share with you guys.

I'm on tumblr as artsy-death if you want to reach me there and this has been chapter 46 of In The End.

I hope you enjoyed!

What Are Words

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Katsuki manages to arrange four more donations before the news blows up on the internet from a thread that grows and grows before her eyes.

It's only then she books a late night train ticket and drags her pack from the wardrobe before very quietly making her way out in the early morning before Endeavour had a chance to wake-up and process the fact that he had, involuntarily, become front and centre news for more than one generous escapade.

She'd also taken out a good chunk of cash during the week in case he decided that actually cancelling the card was in order and opened up a new bank account in her name with a new credit card because Katsuki is an asshole like that.

It takes a bit of shuffling to get situated on her bike with the oversized bag on her back but she's out and away from the house before the first rays of sunlight stretches out over the streets.

-

Katsuki parks her bike in a park near Best Jeanist's apartment, secures the helmet to the bag, and re-shoulders it before making the short route to the Number Three Hero's apartment building where she's given a cursory glance before being let inside.

The front desk has a single person situated in a neat crisp red get-up and Katsuki ignores them as she make a beeline towards the elevator, pressing the highest number on the thing after shuffling inside.

It stops twice on the way up and Katsuki pretends not to notice the low whispers of the young couple beside her as she keeps her eyes fixated on the steadily climbing number before it finally comes to a halt and the couple steps out.

She breathes out, rubbing at her ear as she slid a small panel aside and hit the nine digit number there before slotting it back in place.

The door closes and with a small rumble the elevator climbs the last

bit before opening to let her out.

Best Jeanist's floor is a single corridor with a single door in front of her and Katsuki gives it three sharp knocks, waiting, and then sighs as she drops the bag to the floor and shuffles aside before sliding down against the wall until she's seated on the rugged floor.

Katsuki fishes for her phone, opening up the first message from Fuyumi and sending a short one back without reading it.

There are no messages from Endeavour but she isn't surprised.

She contemplates sending a message to Best Jeanist but ultimately decides not to and instead drags her headphones up over her ears and slides the book she'd borrowed from Endeavour's office out of her backpack before settling back to read.

-

Katsuki wakes up with a bleary start.

It takes her mind a short moment to place where she is but Best Jeanist is *very* fucking close, crouched down just in front of her with enough space that had she'd lashed out he would have had time to react.

Mitsuki had been crouched down in front of her a similar position many times before, occasionally on her knees to peer beneath the bed when Katsuki had crammed herself beneath it during those first two years, always with that careful measured distance.

She uses her shoulder to push her headphones off her ear.

"What's the time?" She yawns wide enough that she feels her eyes water before she forced her mouth shut with a small grimace.

"Almost seven p.m.." Best Jeanist straightens out and Katsuki eases herself to her feet, grabbing her bag as he unlocked the door with a beep of a card and the quiet entering of a twelve-digit code before it clicked open with a sharp sound as metal slid back to allow the doorknob to be twisted.

"I wasn't sure what to think when I got a phone call from Endeavour's secretary," Best Jeanist comments as she pushes out of her shoes before padding past him towards the guest room she'd stayed at last time to drop off her bag. "Endeavour's Hero Agency has been making

the news all day with your name and picture coming up more than once. Putting one and two together I would gamble and say you did this without his approval.”

She makes a wide circle around him towards the kitchen.

“What I do on my spare time is none of his fucking business.”

“It was quite sizable donations,” Best Jeanist observes, folding down in an armchair that allowed him a broad view of the room and crossing one leg over the other.

Her shoulders eases.

“That’s on him.” She finds an entire bowl of what looks like chicken and feta cheese salad and gives it a sniff before pulling it out and peeling the plastic wrapper off. “He should have put a fucking limit on the card if he was *concerned*.”

She grabs a bottle of water before dropping down on the couch on the opposite end away from Best Jeanist and stabbing a fork into it.

“You were there,” Katsuki reminds him. “*The world cannot afford to lose Endeavour as it stands now*, you told me. What better fucking way to ensure he stays where he is if not by making sure people *want him to fucking stay?*” She pulls her lips back to bare her teeth. “He’s not All Might, and he’ll never fucking be, but he can be *something else*.”

There’s consideration and a low hum as Best Jeanist settles back properly.

“I cannot fault your logic but he’s not going to be very happy with you,” he warns and Katsuki already knows that, *thank you very fucking much*.

But that’s just something she’s going to have to deal with.

Preferably after his temper had some time to cool.

I’m not completely fucking suicidal.

“I came here, didn’t I?” Katsuki grumbles, stabbing her fork down into the salad. “I didn’t plan it out of the fucking blue. I was *careful* about what I donated to and planned it because I’m not *stupid*.”

“I never said you were,” Best Jeanist drags a hand down his fringe. “The response has been overwhelmingly positive, with a few sceptics

trying to sweep it away as a publicity stunt.”

Which isn't wrong, Katsuki thinks as she shoves the fork into her mouth to drag the food off, enjoying the crispness of the tomato against the heavier flavour of the cheese and chicken.

“Endeavour is quick to think on his feet and he caught on pretty quickly to what the intent of it was and you lucked out on the fact that it was leaked by a worker at the orphanage you donated to. The woman in charge of it made a statement late afternoon describing your encounter and pressing the point that you'd requested it wasn't fed to the news. It plays in your favour.” Best Jeanist presses his fingers together. “I cannot condone your actions but I recognise your actions for what they were.”

Katsuki slants him a look because that was a fucked up way of saying *good work* in a really circular way.

“I must ask though.” Best Jeanist tilts his head, green eyes intent on her. “Why come *here*?”

She snorts. “Where else was I supposed to go? I needed someone without enough clout that he wouldn't go after them and you're the only numbered Hero I know.”

She might not have liked Best Jeanist triggering her, she's fucking *resentful*, but she knows where he stands, ultimately.

She tries to picture what kind of face All Might would have made had she come knocking on his door and promptly shoves the thought away.

“I can leave,” she says when he considers her. “I have enough to get a hotel room-“

“No,” Best Jeanist says and his tone is steady and firm. “I am glad you came here and my words from last time stands. It's better if you stay here, not only for your own sake.” There's a brief motion of hesitance, a stilling of his hand that had gone to his fringe. “I also wish to discuss what happened last time.”

Katsuki tenses, eyes focused on the large bowl of food in front of her, but-

She'd *known* that coming to Best Jeanist would mean fucking *talking* and shoving her head in the sand would get her nowhere.

She reaches for the bottle of water, unscrewing it, aware of his eyes upon her as she swallowed down half after popping an electrolyte pill into it.

It's left fizzling at the bottom of it as she places it back on the table before she turns her head resolutely towards him.

"So what kind of *solution* do you have to it?" Katsuki asks with a mocking curl of her lips. "I dissociate, it's not a fucking fix-it situation you're dealing with."

"I would never do you the disservice of thinking it's easy. But answer me something: have you told anyone the full story of how exactly you came to be here? Detailed everything leading up to your death as Amélie Caron?"

"So what if I haven't?" The coldness in her chest feels jagged and sharp. "It's been *eight years*."

"You were *murdered*." The word sounds impossibly heavy in his mouth. "By someone you knew and felt something for. That kind of trauma doesn't just go away, especially when you won't give yourself the time to *grieve*."

"What the fuck is that supposed to mean?" she growls, wiring tense.

"You're thirty and sixteen and made up of memories of two people who died *far too early*."

Katsuki's teeth clenches together.

"You lost *everything*." There's empathy in Best Jeanist's voice but Katsuki jerks back as if struck. "You lost your world, your parents, any sense of security and familiarity. Those memories are *yours*."

"I know they are," Katsuki spits out but her heart beat is loud in her ears and she feels clammy. "I've never pretended they weren't."

"Your dissociative episode brought you to a mind back to just after Amélie had been killed." The words are damning, somehow, and Katsuki swallows. "You recognised yourself as *Katsuki* but you were confused and terrified and a danger to yourself and those around you." Best Jeanist's heavy gaze doesn't allow her to look away from him. "You need to talk about it and give yourself time to process it now that you're in a position where you *can*."

Katsuki forces herself to break eye contact.

“It doesn’t have to be with me,” Best Jeanist says after a long moment. “But I must press that it is with a Pro-Hero who is familiar in dealing with mental health issues and who is aware of your situation. This isn’t something you can talk out with a friend or-“

“I’d never,” Katsuki interrupts thickly. “I’d *never* force Mina to-“

“That’s good.” His voice lowers and Katsuki curls her fingers tight because she’s not a fucking *child* and he’d *hurt her* and yet she finds herself latching out to the calming undertone of his voice because what fucking else is she supposed to *do*? “I won’t force the issue today, but I will be here no matter who you decide on.”

Katsuki stares at her hands.

She remembers Amélie's hands – slimmer, shorter, lacking the small scattering of scars after hot blisters and scratches. Instead there'd been a small white line on her thumb where she'd missed with a knife when cooking, a scar down her wrist where she'd slipped and fallen from a tree, tearing it open when she was nine and trying to build a tree house in their backyard.

Remembers how she'd stubbornly bitten down on her lip even as tears trickled down her face as she pressed her small hand against it and stumbled her way into the house to find her *Mom* and *Dad*.

“Where the fuck am I even supposed to begin?” Katsuki wonders, feeling strangely lost. “It’s twenty-two year’s worth of memories.”

“We don’t need to do this now,” Best Jeanist cautions but he sighs as she raises her head to look at him. “Start small. You don’t need to rush into it.” He hesitates but- “Your parents, perhaps. Or something you enjoyed doing – hobbies, studies, sports, that kind of thing.”

Katsuki bites down on the inside of her cheek.

“There’s never been a case quite like yours that I know of but grief and trauma I am familiar with.”

And he would be, wouldn’t he?

Heroes were revered to a sickening level, faulted for the slightest slip of their masks, expected to live up to impossible standards to satisfy the demands of society. But they were working the dark parts of

society, some, like Aizawa gearing themselves to handle the matters of the underworld where children were sold for their genes to make perfect quirks.

Even Heroes like All Might had a trail of lost lives – a failure of living up to what was expected, the media doing its absolute best to cover it up but it didn't erase the reality of it. They could pretend all they fucking wanted but the world is a place filled with misery and messiness.

And Heroes aren't exceptions to human nature.

-

What's in a Hero?

It has been years and Katsuki never finds herself liking the answers.

-

In the end it's the simple matter of reality that has her, haltingly, opening her mouth to say anything at all.

What do I even have left to lose with the truth?

-

"I love you," Masaru's voice ghosts through her mind. *"I'm glad you're alright. I'll see you soon, son."*

Words she'd wished to hear again in the aftermath of the League of Villain's kidnapping and which were now were entirely out of her grasp.

"I love you."

"I'm glad you're alright."

-

"I'll see you soon, daughter."

-

"I find myself wondering what happened *after*, you know?" Katsuki tells Best Jeanist as she slices up the baguette.

He's setting the table behind her with a small plate of lemons, aioli whisked and in place, a wine glass each with a single bottle of something ridiculously expensive on the table cloth.

She'd eyed him but if he wants to share a bottle of wine with her she certainly isn't about to protest.

"Did they ever find out that James was the one who did it or is he still free? I hate it. Mom and Dad - they don't deserve spending the rest of their days wondering what the fuck lead up to me being murdered."

It's so fucking strange to hear her own thoughts verbalized but she finds that if she just... looks at the food it's easier, somehow.

Like dictating her life to the unassuming blank eyes of a tiny dead shrimp piled among its kin in a ugly crystal bowl.

"I introduced him to them when we were dating." Katsuki grabs the bread and places it in the basket with red napkin unfolded at the bottom and spreads them out in a spiralling patterns before piling the last on top. "He was fucking awkward about it - turned up in classy shirt and a fucking *tie* and *flowers*. Mom and Dad were both very approving."

It had been a good day, for her Mom, and Katsuki remembers the soft warm glow joy of the quiet dinner where everyone had used ASL.

That feeling of *belonging*.

"He didn't come from a good home. He didn't like speaking of it but I know so much. He mostly spoke of his little brother if he mentioned family at all. They were separated into different foster homes and James tried to keep track of him but the kid barely remembered him when he finally managed to get in contact with him."

Katsuki remembers because James had asked Amélie to come along only to find an eight-year-old boy with rosy cheeks clutching the hand of a girl in her late teens who'd given them an awkward smile when she was introduced as his *big sister*.

They'd suffered through a dinner and at the end of it the mother had slipped her a phone number with a pitying glance at James whose smile had gotten so strained that that it was painful to watch.

《*I'm happy for him,*》 James had signed as Amélie texted their pizzeria with a double order back in the apartment they shared. 《*But*

that could have been me had I been younger, you know? No one ever wants to adopt a teenager and those who do aren't always the good sort. »

James parents had been killed by a drunk driver who'd fallen asleep at the wheel and slammed into their car. His younger sister had lost her life but James and his brother had survived and been split up.

His brother, only three, had been adopted nearly immediately.

James hadn't been so lucky.

"That doesn't excuse his actions." There's a *pop* of the cork from the wine bottle and when she glances behind her she finds him pouring generously for them both. "People come from all sort of backgrounds and while we can extend understanding, forgiveness is an entirely different thing."

"I know," Katsuki says but her mouth twists. "I still can't help but wonder *why* and it fucking bothers me that I'll never know. There wasn't some grand sign. He was the same damn person I'd known for years leading up to the thing but that also makes me question if I missed something, ya know? How do I- "*know the same fucking thing won't happen again?*"

Because how is she supposed to trust when she can't judge the sincerity of something basic like *kindness*? When she keeps second guessing the intention of those around her?

Katsuki had read the notes from her therapists and *paranoia* had been a reoccurring theme of her sessions with them but *being aware of it* isn't a fucking fix-it when she feels entitled to her, very reasonable, wariness.

"Trust is a frail thing to rebuild but you're trying and that's all you really can do," Best Jeanist says and Katsuki gives him a flat look. "You *are*," he affirms as she places the food onto the table before hoisting herself up on one of the tall chairs. "You wouldn't be here if you weren't. It's admirable."

"Admirable isn't the word I'd use," Katsuki grumbles, shoving her sleeves up, pausing, and then slipping her bracelet and ring off and pocketing them.

"You could have gone down an entirely different path," Best Jeanist points out as he reaches for the bread and the fancy green mould cheese that tickled at her nose with its sharp scent. "There's a

difference between what is right and what is easy and you've lost more than many. But you're still finding your own path despite everything. You came here, when I did something unforgivable, because you *want* to get better."

Katsuki reaches to twist the head of the closest shrimp with some viciousness, discarding the shell into the bowl beside her after peeling it open, saying nothing.

-

Katsuki dreams of the stretch of the yellow grass and the red apples that had hang heavy from the branches of the trees around them.

She lifts her hand and clenches down, admiring the veins that strains against her skin.

When she turns her head she sees blood spilling down lips that *drown, drown, drown* with a desperate mouthed *help me-*

-

She wakes up drenched in sweat, her heart pounding as she tumbled blindly off the bed, knees barely hitting the ground before her gut clenched and she vomited all over Best Jeanist's fancy rugged floor.

The taste is sour and wretched, familiar, and Katsuki's palm hits the ground beside it as her body tensed, choking as she threw up again, acidic and thick against her tongue as she spat.

The door opens and Katsuki blinks as light flooded the room, slowly drawing herself back to slump against the wall.

"sorry," she mutters to Best Jeanist who stands tall in only a pair of sweatpants, his normally perfect fringe mussed from sleep and eyes taking in the situation with tension in his slim wiry frame.

"I don't care about the rug," he says, his tone frank as he took a step inside the room, measuring her response before crouching down as she gives him a tired blank look. "What do you need?" he asks her.

This is your fault, Katsuki thinks resentfully but there's no real anger, only exhaustion and bitterness.

Katsuki watches him with dark red eyes as he shifts and then slowly settles down beside her, his arm brushing against hers.

The room smells of sweat and vomit but Best Jeanist makes no comment of it as Katsuki turns her head to press her forehead against his shoulder.

-

Katsuki digs her spoon into a large package of chocolate and vanilla ice cream as she watches Endeavour on the television.

It has been three days since her actions hit the news media and Endeavour had either been appearing or been in mention in every single broadcast as more Heroes followed in his footsteps. Ridiculously large numbers were being thrown around as they made spectacles of themselves in an attempt to get some of the praise heaped onto the *Number One Hero*.

It is, objectively, both disgusting and amusing and Katsuki feels rather smug because hell, the media couldn't get fucking *enough* of Endeavour.

Had he done it in the past? Was it just now coming to the surface? Had he-

The questions were numerous and Endeavour was truly playing them artfully by being his usually standoffish self which largely left the media making up their own assumptions and stories and running with it.

Endeavour doesn't say *no* but he doesn't confirm either and people are left guessing and scrambling.

I'm a marvel, Katsuki thinks, licking her tongue along the spoon.

Her phone vibrates in her pocket and she sticks the metal into her mouth, biting down as she fished it up and turned it on with a press of her thumb against the surface.

A single message waits for her and Katsuki stares at it.

I do believe you've made yourself deserving of this, girl.

A number is written out below it and Katsuki's mouth curls fiendish around the fork, anticipation worming through her and a frothing dangerous sort of craving for violence unfurled like a flower inside her chest.

Finally.

Chapter End Notes

Life after trauma isn't a smooth ride and Katsuki is going to have her ups and downs but that's also... a general state of being for her so. Nothing new.

I'm a firm believer in that you have to start *somewhere* and Best Jeanist is the only one who stepped up to take some sort of responsibility. She might not like it, certain things complicates it, but that's the situation all the same.

I imagine Aizawa would have made a good pick as well but considering the situation that's just not going to happen. He has 1-A to deal with and they have to take priority since they're his responsibility. Likewise with Midnight and Present Mic; they can't just up and leave their classes behind.

I also just generally like writing Best Jeanist and Katsuki together. They're a delight.

Don't have much to say about the next chapter. I think we all know what's going down and it's been a long time coming.

Your endless support feeds my writing soul, thank you for being amazing <3

You can find me on tumblr as artsy-death if you're around there and this has been chapter 47 of In The End.

I hope you enjoyed!

All Might

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Katsuki stares blankly at the apartment complex in front of her.

Small, nice enough, but not particularly fancy, traditionally Japanese in its essence and with lush green nature flourishing in the small front garden with trees stretching up.

The sun is warm above her, a single red feathered bird hopping on the ground, a young couple stepping out of their house with a small child clutching their hands some two doors down.

Katsuki looks down on her phone and then to the street sign and finally the number and drags a hand through her hair, mouth twisting.

Of course he's the kind to donate his entire fucking wealth to charity. Bet he shops with coupons.

The thought is unfair, and she knows it, especially considering what she'd been doing for Endeavour, but Katsuki isn't in a particularly charitable mood.

All Might's apartment is on the upper floor and she climbs the stairs, wiping her hand on her jeans despite her sweat glands being completely shut off, before raising it to give three sharp knocks.

Steps back and waits, fingers flexing at her sides, something ugly lurking inside of her.

Why.

The thought thrums through her as she hears the sound of soft, shuffling, footsteps making their way towards the other side of the door.

And then it's opening up and Katsuki raises her head because All Might is tall, even like this, skeletal in his sunken form, eyes shadowed dark but only making his eyes stand out more eerily in contrast.

It makes for a pitiful picture with the too big clothes hanging off his

frame, as if he hadn't come to terms with the fact that he wasn't what he had been and represented for years now.

"It is... good to see you, Touya-san." He shuffles back to gesture her inside, his feet adorned in soft fluffy slippers.

Katsuki steps slowly into the apartment, eyes drifting over the surprisingly homely area, knick-knacks crowding on shelves, an old timely music system set up in place of a television. The heat is turned up high, her neck prickling in response, and she drops her backpack down on the floor before yanking her sweater up over her head and letting it fall on top before stepping out of her sneakers.

All Might let's out a cough and her eyes darts to him as he wipes blood from his lips with a white napkin.

"Would you like some tea? I believe I have a berry flavoured one if you're opposed to green tea."

"Green is fine," she says shortly.

He gives her a measured look but ducks his head. "Feel free to look around if you want. I'll be back in a moment."

Katsuki stands stiff for a long moment before she turns her attention to the table in front of the couch, bending to snatch up the notebook there as familiar handwriting snags her attention.

Hero Analysis For The Future #2

There's a flash of a small green haired boy with too bright eyes shoving it onto her face, mouth moving excitedly.

"Imagine! We'll be Heroes together, Kacchan!"

"Hah!? As if you could be a Hero you weak De-"

Katsuki drops it back onto the table as the air shimmers dangerously and forces her attention on the library of LP records.

There are a fair few she recognises, she realises, fingers lingering and finally tugging out *Beatles for Sale*.

It surprises her, the things that remain the same between this world and Amélie's when they so clearly differ in other ways.

She'd never heard the music, of course, but there had been times

when her Mom had patted the couch beside her and guided her hand to press against her throat. With her other hand she'd follow along with the music on the inside of the cover, allowing her to feel the vibrations of her throat as she sang along.

Little darling, the smiles returning to the faces

Little darling, it seems like years since it's been here-

"A fan of the Beatles?" All Might asks and her eyes dart towards him as he carefully places a tray of tea down onto the table behind her.

"My Mom was fond of them," Katsuki says, sliding it back in place. "*I'll Follow The Sun* was her favourite."

"It's a good choice." All Might sinks carefully down on the couch, long thin fingers curling around the handle of the tea pot to pour for them. "I've always had a weakness for The Kinks if we're talking the nineteen sixties."

She watches the tremble in his hand as she grabs and drags a flat piano-like stool from its corner and drops down as All Might lifts the small cup over to place it closer to her with a nudge of the milk and sugar bowl.

Katsuki hasn't actually *heard* the Beatles. Or, if she has, she hasn't registered it as such since she pays very little attention to music in general. Most of it just strikes her as strange, even bothersome. Classical she found somewhat tolerable and it was what Masaru usually played in the kitchen if they kept any background music on at all and that had been rare.

Because of her.

The knowledge twists inside of her, curling with the ice hot *something* lurking deep, deep inside of her, growing as she looks at All Might with dark eyes and curling lips.

"I was informed," All Might broaches carefully, "that you are aware of the situation between myself and Midoriya." He looks at her with those blue, so very blue, eyes. "How did you find out?"

"You mean other than your blatant fucking favouritism?" Katsuki drawls mockingly. "Because that's a thing that you want to tone down if you're actually trying to keep it under wraps." She bares her teeth. "I can put two and two together. I saw you during U.S.J. fucking

shrinking and that could have been part of your quirk, of course, but you were a bit too invested in Midoriya, a bit too *keen* in shaping someone who I *know* were quirkless before U.A. but now had powers that matched suspiciously to yours.”

All Might is thin and frail and small where he sits in the silence of the room, his cup making a small *clink* as he places it down.

“You are angry,” he observes, gaze unreadable.

“It’s *ugly*,” Katsuki growls and it feels *good* to finally say it. “A generation isn’t built on the shoulder of a sixteen-year-old boy and you’re giving the other students far too little credit. You’re *actively shaping someone to become you* while ignoring others. I don’t like it, I’m *never going to like it*, and frankly you’re just placing the pieces for another situation *just like this one*.” She narrows her eyes. “How big is your ego to think that the world won’t survive without some fucking *Symbol of Peace*? You’re in a position to shape an entire generation to do whatever the fuck you Heroes stand for and instead you’re setting a single boy up for failure.” She snorts. “As he is now Midoriya will burn himself out or cripple himself beyond saving, whatever happens first, and you’re just watching it happen.”

“For someone who has made your dislike of him clear-“

“Oh *fuck right off your high-horse, All Might*.” The anger rises violently through her, viscous and cruel, acidic and bitter on her tongue but also so very fucking *right*. “The fuck do you really know about me?” Katsuki hisses. “You never took the *time*, you just made up your own fucking assumptions and ran with it. You *beat me bloody* thinking I was a sixteen-year-old boy because you found some kind of, what, righteous intention in it!? In what world-“ Katsuki demands with a heaving of her chest, “is that *acceptable* for the Number One Hero? What kind of *message* were you trying to impart because I’m not understanding it.”

Katsuki is aware of the light creeping of hysteria and there’s a tremble that she can’t stop, an instinctive *fear* that she struggles against because All Might is *weak, weak, weak, he can’t hurt me, he can’t-*

“That was never my intention,” All Might says finally, his voice heavy.

“Then what the fuck was it!?” Katsuki gasps out. “You are this world’s top Hero and you looked at me and you judged me fucking *unworthy*. You might as well have spat on me! And during the fucking Sports Festival you-“

“Tou-“

“-muzzled me like a fucking dog.” She laughs, light and airy, almost deliriously as she drags a hand over her face, spreading her fingers to look at him, smile too sharp “A dog, All Might, is that all I am in your eyes? I wasn’t your precious Midoriya so I *didn’t matter!*”

She bares her teeth.

“Your favouritism is fucking *ugly*. I never did *anything* to deserve that level of cruelty from you! I never deserved to wake up in the middle of the fucking night *terrified* of having the world’s most beloved Hero capable of brutalizing me into a fucking *pulp* because I’d snubbed his fucking precious *star pupil*.” Her smile stretches wider, teeth gleaming sharp and white. “People blame me for your downfall because it’s easier than accepting that you’ve been faltering for *years* and now you’re-“

“*Touya.*”

Katsuki flinches violently as All Might balloons up, muscles expanding, her pupils shrinking, and she finds herself pinned in place in the nightmarish vision that had haunted her waking dreams.

All Might in his full glory, stronger, faster, capable of tearing her apart with his bare hands.

She whitens, robbed off all colour, muscles locked in place, her heart pounding rabbit like in fear that floods her veins, drowning out the anger to leave something far more twisted in place.

“Please.” All Might’s voice registers like a cottony buzz against the ringing in her ears. “Understand when I say *this* was never my intention.” He slowly sits back down and his body shrinks in a steam of white.

Dangerous, her mind whispers. *At any moment he can-*

“I understand that you feel like I’ve wronged you but I have only ever acted in this world’s best interest and it has never been safer than under my care. It’s not arrogance, it simply is.” He sighs heavily. “I’ve learnt of your circumstances but my judgement on you still stand, perhaps harsher, with the knowledge of your true age. Your anger is ill-fit in the Hero business and you stand to endanger not only yourself but those around you.” His mouth hardens and Katsuki’s nails digs into her thighs. “That does not excuse my own actions and their

impact on you. It was my intention to show you that there will always be someone stronger out there. You excelled at everything, top of the class. It was a dangerous combination with your arrogance and temper. You showed it the first lesson and you never proved me differently.”

There’s something inside of her, something dark and heavy but also cold and empty, ugly in its wretchedness because-

Katsuki had only set off to become a Hero because she wanted to *understand*. Because she’d stolen the life of a boy who could have been *something*, who wanted to be just like this man, this *Hero*, and instead-

Instead she hadn’t measured up.

“Is that how you excuse your favouritism as well?” Katsuki’s voice comes out strange and distant. “It’s all good to leave your other students behind if it serves the *best interest* of this Hero Society?”

“Midoriya-shounen is my responsibility,” All Might says and Katsuki bites down on the inside of her cheek. “I am why he is in the position he is. He needs guidance only I can give.” A troubled look settles on his face. “But it was not my intention to neglect my other students. I have responsibility to them too, of course, and I will strive to do better by them.”

Her nails scratches against the fabric of her jeans.

“But not me. It was – *fine*. What you did to me.”

“The outcome is unfortunate, I admit.” All Might leans forward, tired but firm. “But I do not believe you’re fit to continue down this path you’re on. Perhaps I am wrong, Endeavour clearly see something in you so I can only trust in his judgement for now.”

He bows his head.

“I am sorry,” he tells her. “It was not my intention to frighten you, merely set you right on this path of Heroism. I might not have gone about it the right way but I stand by my actions all the same.”

-

Katsuki twirls the phone in her hand, staring at the small screen, backpack beside her on the ground in the alley she’d found her escape in.

New, bought with cash.

She enters a familiar number into it before raising up to her ear and pressing the green button.

It rings once.

Twice.

Three times.

And then there's a *click* and a familiar scratchy voice reaching her thick with sleep, short and cautious at the unfamiliar number.

"Who is it?"

Katsuki bites down on her lip, struggling against something thick in her throat.

"I'm going to hang-up if you don't-"

"Dabi," squeezes out. *"I'm-"* She closes her eyes. *"I don't-"* But the words dies in her mouth because what the *fuck* is she even supposed to say?

All Might just told me I'm a bad Hero, and I'm a fucking mess, because his opinion still matter, and I don't know why, but it hurts, and-

Pathetic, her mind hisses with vitrol and Katsuki *hates it, hates it, hates it-*

"Katsuki?" There's a new alertness to his voice, but also a note of cautious confusion. *"Why do you-"* There's a rustle, a different familiar feminine voice in the background and Dabi's voice muffled before-

"Kasu-chan?" Himiko's voice is strangely intent, but oh so *soft*, and it strokes against her shot nerves in a way that makes her press the phone closer against her ear, straining to hear. *"Where are you?"*

"I don't know." Katsuki presses the heel of her palm against her eyes. *"Some fucking alley. I can't-"*

"Ssssh. It's okay. We're coming to pick you up. All you need to tell me is where you are. Can you find a street sign?"

"I'm not- I don't want the League-"

“Of course. Just me and Dabi. We’ll go to one of our apartments – it’ll be just like old times! The three of us against the world.”

The words are a fool's dream. A promise of something impossible.

A world before U.A. and the League, before Heroes and Villains, before *All Might*-

Katsuki lowers her hand and looks out to the street.

She doesn't recognise it.

She has no idea how long she'd walked, just intent of getting *away*, and she slowly drags herself to her feet, feeling miserable and pathetic where she stands in the middle of a dirty alley.

Her jeans are wet. She doesn't know what she'd been sitting it.

Isn't sure she cares.

Katsuki takes a slow step forward, and then another until she can slump against the brick wall at the entrance of the alley.

There are dark shadows behind her and the setting sun casting its last light on the world.

Her fingers brushes against the faded scars of the muzzle around her mouth.

I stand by my actions.

“Kasu-chan?”

She raises her head and finds the closest street sign.

Chapter End Notes

All Might isn't a bad person, just human, but there are good ways to go about things and there are bad ways. He's a complicated man but as we saw with his first meeting with Midoriya he's capable of making harsh judgements if he thinks it's for the better.

I'm aware that this didn't go down the way many if you might have hoped for but I do not think All Might would be able to stand by Katsuki's actions. It's, maybe, unfair, perhaps cruel in its way, or perhaps it is simply the fair judgement of it.

He doesn't know Katsuki, at the end of the day, and has only seen the worst side of her. It's just the way it is at this point.

Heavy chapter but, important.

I'm gonna finish up my exam and then get back to responding to you guys. Your love and support has been amazing and I am ever so soft and warm. Thank you for being awesome.

You can find me on tumblr as artsy-death and this has been chapter 48 of In The End.

I hope you enjoyed!

Inhale, Exhale

Chapter Notes

Round Cheeks = Ochako

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Katsuki's hand crunches around something before the motion really registers.

It's a familiar shape, her thumb already digging in to flick the lid open as Dabi stepped through a pool of water and into the alley.

There's a bruise, dark and mottled around his eye, a healing scab in his lower lip and scratches on his cheek that looks new.

Katsuki wonders if she imagines that he looks thinner than he had the last time she saw him.

"You look pathetic," he drawls.

"I don't want to hear that from you." Katsuki digs out a cigarette, biting down on the butt of it as Dabi crouched down before her, looking remarkably like a tufty bat with his wild spiky hair and leather coat. "What did you do? Get into a fight with a cat?"

Long elegant fingers move with a theatrical little snap, flame sparking to life at the very tip, and Katsuki drags in smoke and the scent of sulphur clinging to him as she leans back.

"New member startled Himiko. Was a bit of a disaster." He shrugs, accepting the cigarette as she turns it around, feeling the warmth of his lips as they press against her fingers. He lets the smoke curl slow and long into his lungs before pulling away and tilting his head up, allowing her a good look at the stretch of his neck as he blew it out. "He's lucky I'm a light sleeper."

"How many times did she get you?" she asks in interest.

"Only two times." Dabi rolls his neck, pulling down on the white shirt, and Katsuki leans forward to study the dark stitches standing out harshly against the mottled stretch of scarring. "She got him four, it was quite the spectacle. But he was being an idiot, sneaking around as he was."

“He survived then,” she says, taking another drag of the cigarette, the lulling calm of the nicotine settling comfortably beneath her skin and easing the buzz of her mind.

“He’s a quick bastard,” Dabi admits grudgingly. “She went right for his throat with the first swing but it lodged into his collar bone. But it’s not a mistake he’ll make again.” There’s a pleased note to his voice, something like dark amusement, but also-

It’s rare that Dabi notices other people enough to comment on them. Himiko had just sort of turned up with him one day and Katsuki hadn’t much questioned it.

Whoever this new member is he’d caught Dabi’s interest.

“So, want to tell me why you’re sitting in who-knows-what in the middle of an alley?” Dabi asks, easing back to allow his feet to settle flat against the ground, hands half-clasped at his knees.

“I went off on All Might,” Katsuki tells him, flicking the cigarette to rid of the ash clinging to the tip. “Miscalculated, things went sideways and I’m an idiot.” There’s a feeling, somewhere, but it feels distant and misplaced inside of her, a realisation and resignation but also something she can’t grasp at.

Leftovers from the boy.

At least that’s the only thing that makes sense, Katsuki rationalizes to herself, because fuck all if she really cared what All Might thought of her but the boy had loved him, idolized him, *wanted to be just like him*.

It was the whole reason Katsuki had thought to apply to U.A. in the first place.

Sometimes Katsuki wonders, bitterly, if it wouldn’t have been easier if the boy had disappeared completely.

“They have a way of getting under your skin, don’t they?” Dabi steals the cigarette from her fingers. “Heroes this and Heroes that, celebrated and beloved by society, blind eyes turned to their faults.” His voice is rough and dark, a coiling of something heavy with smoke licking from the corners of his lips, the cigarette untouched in his hand. “Heroism is a *disease*.”

“There will always be those valued more in society,” Katsuki says with a tiredness that aches inside of her. “Tear one system down and

another will grow in its place. As long as there's rich people and poor people there will be oppression and dissatisfaction. All humans are capable of cruelty, it doesn't stop because you slap a title on them and the wrong sort of people will always find their way to positions they shouldn't be in." She breathes out. "Mom used to tell me *keep your head down, your mouth shut, and don't draw attention – all they need is an excuse.*"

Dabi snorts and her head snaps up, brow furrowing and mouth opening but-

"It's just funny," he tells her, head tilting towards the sky. "Mine used to tell me the same thing."

It's a stark reminder of just what kind of person she's living with and Katsuki's gaze dips down to the scars and surgical staples hooked into his skin.

"But life taught me that it doesn't have to stay that way." His turquoise eyes glitters prettily in the dim light of the moon reaching them. "Sometimes the hunter becomes the prey and the poor eat the rich." His mouth stretches. "We don't have to give them the satisfaction of *winning.*"

Her fingers presses against his skin, feeling the roughness of his scars as she traces it, and his eyes grows lidded and dark as he watches her.

"I will become the Best!" The will and resonance of a dead boy.

"I stand by my actions." The words of the Hero he had admired.

"Come," he says, hand stretching out in offering as the cigarette dropped forgotten to the ground with a hiss against the water as the embers died.

He pulls her up, drawing her closer with a tug, his other palm settling warm against her jaw and angling her head up as he pressed down, slanting his lips against hers as she inhaled sharply through her nose.

There's roughness but also softness in the way he kisses her, slow and aching as he parts his lips for her, allowing her to taste him as her fingers tangles in the hair at his neck, drawing him closer with a low answering groan.

She'd missed him.

It's a knowledge that tugs sharp at her as he backs her up against the brick wall, turning the tables with a hunger that leaves her helpless to do anything but succumb to it.

-

Himiko collides with her and only a palm pressing flat against her back keeps her from going down as arms winds around her neck, legs locking tight behind her back, and a soft chest pressing tight against her own.

"Took your time," Dabi drawls, removing his hand.

"Go away!" Himiko's voice comes out muffled against Katsuki's neck, her lips moving warm and soft against her skin. "You're ruining my reunion with Kasu-chan."

"Fine, fine," Dabi waves his hand and there's a rustle as he steps past them. "I know when I'm not welcome."

Katsuki lowers her gaze to the long blonde strands beneath her nose, the streets dark around them, the sound of a siren ringing distant. It's cloudy, she'd forgotten her jacket at All Might's house, but despite that she's not cold.

Instead there's warmth, the feeling of Himiko's chest rising and falling with her breaths, the distant soft *thu-thump thu-thump* of her heart as she presses almost desperately closer.

Slowly Katsuki winds one arm around her, drawing her closer.

"Missed you," Himiko says so soft, so quiet that Katsuki strains to hear it. "Stupid."

-

She wakes up to the scent of iron and flowers, the soft swell of a chest rising and falling beneath her and her head tucked beneath a bony chin. One of Himiko's hands had crept up beneath the t-shirt Dabi had borrowed her, nails creasing against her skin.

Katsuki's heavier and larger than the other blonde and she's quite sure she'd been the one of her back the night before. But she'd long learnt that underestimating Himiko is a dangerous thing to do and she shifts slowly, nails scraping against her skin before the other's hand slid off.

She rests on her knees, studying the younger girl.

There's something almost... *soft* about Himiko like this. Her hair loose, her sleeping shirt white with a large smiling shark on the front, the make-up she'd forgotten to remove smudged on one side and mouth open to let out small puffs of breath, one sharp canine peeking out.

But it's wrong to call Himiko soft, Katsuki knows that.

She reaches out, brushing a curling strand of blonde hair away from Himiko's mouth before slowly climbing off the bed and grabbing the blanket from the floor to throw over her before padding quietly towards the kitchen and the scent of coffee and food.

Dabi.

Bare chested, wearing nothing but a pair of sweatpants and an apron tied around his waist, hair shorter than it had been the last time she saw him but still drooping in that particular style of his. New scars – purple and mottled where they climbed near his neck with staples still red where they had dug in.

Katsuki brushes her fingers against his hip and he tilts his head towards her, turquoise eyes dark in the low light from the kitchen lamp.

For a second hesitation curls through her – something strange and unfamiliar, almost daunting in how misplaced it is, but then his mouth is curling up and she finds herself relaxing, stepping closer, hand sliding along the hem of his sweatpants before finally looping around him as she pressed herself against his back, inhaling the scent of sulphur and tasting smoke with the press of her lips against his skin.

They came for me.

The thought curls warm, far softer than she should allow it, but there all the same.

“Wackjob still asleep?”

Katsuki hums, turning to press her cheek against him.

The bacon smells just a bit charred when Dabi deposits them on the plate on the counter, reaching for the eggs and bread with a sizzle that Katsuki knew meant the temperature was far too high, the butter already burnt beyond redemption.

Dabi sighs and Katsuki loops both arms around him before pressing up on her toes to rest her chin on his shoulder, mouth twitching up at the yolk pooling out in the pan.

“Even Shigaraki does eggs better than me these days.” Dabi gives it a poke with his spatula, making an attempt at scraping it up into some semblance of edibility as the edges started curling up.

“That’s sad.” Katsuki reaches down to lower the temperature before it threatened to turn to crisp and Dabi does it all up together before serving it up together with the bacon, the toasts just a side of black.

They stare at it.

“Want to head out and grab something?” Dabi offers finally.

-

They stop by a small café and Katsuki forks over a handful of cash as Dabi lurks near the entrance.

“Is anyone going to be looking for you?” Dabi wonders, hands in his pockets and scars hidden beneath a surgical mask, wide dark frames and a thin looking scarf wrapped twice around his neck, his hair crammed beneath a cap.

“Not today,” Katsuki admits. “Best Jeanist thinks I’m with Endeavour and Endeavour thinks I’m with Best Jeanist.”

As long as there were no phone calls being made she had a good twenty-four hours to get back to Endeavour’s place.

Dabi’s gaze lingers on her and she raises a brow back.

“Surprised you were able to get away at all,” he says wryly and Katsuki huffs, fingers curling tighter around the plastic handles of the bag.

“They’re wary,” she says with a grimace. “But Endeavour doesn’t care as long as I’m there for morning and night training and he doesn’t make all of them anyway, what with being the new Number One Hero. It’ll get busier with Provisional Hero Exam in a week but right now? It’s just training and whatever.”

It surprises her but also not – Endeavour’s disapproval is painted in darker bruises on her skin when she doesn’t obey by his rules but she’s

not his child and he acknowledges that in his own way by allowing her the freedom she has and perhaps Katsuki can respect that. But she also knows that things are going to change once she publically step up after getting her Provisional Hero Licence because Endeavour would be a fool otherwise.

She won't be a by-all-appearance teenager living under his roof at that point but someone connected to him and his Hero Agency

"I saw the news," Dabi says, tone hard to read. "They're keeping your age under wraps then?"

Katsuki grunts.

"They're using you to keep an eye on Endeavour, aren't they?" Dabi observes, keen as always. "If the world thinks you're sixteen you're also young and foolish in its eyes."

She glances up at him. "Does it bother you?"

Dabi reaches down, stealing the plastic bag from her hand and shifting it to his other hand before clasping hers, weaving their fingers together with a squeeze.

"*I know you* Katsuki," Dabi murmurs in a low tone, amusement and something she can't quite place in the roughness of it. "I pity the bastard who think you're playing by their rules."

-

They meet Himiko by a lake and eat breakfast under the early autumn sun.

Katsuki has her pants rolled up to her knees, feet threading idly through the water as she watches Dabi hold a stick of chicken out of reach of Himiko, his palm pressed against her forehead, the other wrapped around the wrist of the hand waving a knife through the air, her cheeks puffed out.

"- give it-"

"- you already ate all the-"

She bites down on her own stick of teriyaki drenched salmon, tongue darting out to catch the sauce threatening to drip against her fingers.

There's a buzz in her pocket and she paws for the phone, chewing as

she blinked at the name visible on the screen of it.

Glances back to Dabi and Himiko before sliding the green button aside with a click and pressing it against her ear with her shoulder.

“Yeah?” she answers gruffly, eyes sliding down to focus on the glittering shimmer of a fish brushing near her feet.

“Ba- Touya! I’m – I’m glad you picked-up.” Round Cheeks' voice comes out odd, almost breathless, if a bit surprised. *“I... didn’t actually expect that.”*

“What do you want?” Katsuki asks idly.

“I’m... okay, look, I know- I know this might not be any of my business but you’re the only one who knows and at this point I don’t really know where else to turn and-“

“Get to the fucking point, Round Cheeks,” Katsuki sighs, flicking her foot out and watching the fish dart away in a hurry.

“... You died eight years ago, right?”

Katsuki pauses.

“What of it?” she asks finally.

“Deku, he’s... he’s blaming himself for something related to it. To – to Kacchan? He’s been withdrawn, quiet, hardly turns up at class – it’s not like him. If I can just understand what happened then maybe-“ Round Cheeks voice quiets. *“I know it’s a terrible thing to ask of you but I want to help him. He’s my friend.”*

A part of her wants to say no, hang-up and be done with it.

But there’s a part of her that still burns with guilt over the death of the boy that had been.

“Fine,” Katsuki growls. “But I’m only saying it once – it’s not my fucking responsibility to deal with and I’m not getting involved.”

“Yes! Yes – of course!” Round Cheeks voice comes close and loud in its breathlessness. *“I’m- thank you. I mean it-“*

“Yeah, yeah,” Katsuki interrupts her, voice flat. “Look, they used to be friends, or something, it was damn complicated from what I remember. They grew up together, used to be friends, idolized All

Might fanatically together, yadda yadda. Kacchan gets his quirk, praise be, society loves him, he gets an ego from it. Midoriya doesn't, he's coined quirkless and I guess Kacchan can't stand it. There's some years of bullying, Midoriya clinging desperately to what they were, thinking they're still *friends*. They're fucking not."

Katsuki drags her hand through her hair.

"They were at a bridge, playing, fuck all if I know, it's a bit hazy. But Kacchan can't stand Midoriya at this point and when he turns to help him, or gesture, or fucking something, Kacchan steps back, misjudges and tumbles off it. Cracks his head open like an egg, the whole dramatics." Katsuki scowls down at the water. "I was a bit messed-up in the aftermath of it, Mitsuki and Masaru ended up moving to get me a *fresh start* or whatever and he made it all about himself and his guilt surrounding it. It's not his fucking fault Kacchan was an idiot and I *told him*. Could very well have been me, fuck if I know."

"... And you didn't see him at all, after that?"

"Not until U.A.," Katsuki says sourly. "So, there. He died, I died, life is shitty, and he needs to get over himself."

"Did he really dislike Deku that much? If Deku though they were friends--"

"They *weren't*," Katsuki interrupts, annoyed. "I doubt *Deku* had a single friend before U.A. after Kacchan and they were friends when they were *four* and then it was just fucked-up. He was quirkless, society isn't very kind to those. You've seen it, right? Late bloomer, issues with control – breaking every damn bone in his body. He didn't get it until very late, it happens, but it fucked with him."

"But if you have his memories... than isn't it true that you're also him, if just a little bit?"

It's true that she has the memories of Bakugou Katsuki but it's also true that few bothered to acknowledge it.

"Amélie."

The ghostly voice of Mitsuki is devastating and hurtful because Katsuki isn't made up only of the woman.

And the dead boy aches for a lot of things.

"I'm not *him*," Katsuki growls. "And I'm not *her*, I'm *Touya Katsuki* and

I'm not getting *involved*."

"I'm sorry, you're right – *this isn't... I'm just worried*." There's a pause. "You really think he didn't have any friends before me and Iida?"

"I don't know," she says with huff, forcing down the anger itching beneath her skin. "I don't particularly *care*. But I'd bet my fucking money on it because he's damn near obsessed with the memory of him and it's not *normal*, circumstances be damned. I'm not his *Kacchan*, and the boy wasn't much worth anything as a friend so he's really better off forgetting about all of it." She tilts her head as a shirt drops to the ground beside her, raising a brow. "It was a shitty accident and *it happens* and he needs a damn therapist to deal with it. This isn't – you're not fucking responsible for his mental health, Round Cheeks, you hear me?"

"*I understand*." Katsuki has the distinct feeling she's being lied to judging by the tone of her voice but also-

Dabi is half-naked beside her, stripped to his boxers, Himiko making short work of her clothes with some impatient wiggling out of them beside him as he stretches his arms out above him.

The sun glints off the staples in his skin and makes the gnarly scarring stand out more red than purple against the pale stretch of his skin.

"That all?" she asks distractedly.

"*Yes. Yes of course, thank you, Touya-senpai!*"

Katsuki twitches.

"*I'll tell everyone you said hello. Take care!*"

The phone clicks off in a hurry and Katsuki drags it a bit disbelievingly from her ear before snorting and stuffing it down her pocket.

"The fuck are you two doing?" she demands, eyeing them.

"Going for a swim!" Himiko exclaims happily, down to a sports bra and a pair of boyshorts patterned with stars and flowers to match it.

Dabi takes a step back and then rocks forward, knees drawing up to his chest as he cannonballed into the water, and Katsuki stares as he breaks the surface with a shake of his head, the hem of her pants

drenched where waves had rocked up against her.

"Or are you afraid to get wet?" he teases, brushing dark hair away from his eyes.

Himiko's palms presses against her shoulders and Dabi's mouth curls into a smirk, hands wrapping around her ankles beneath the surface as Katsuki's eyes widened.

"Let's play, Kasu-chan!" Himiko chirps, shoving her, and Katsuki yelps as Dabi drags her down the last bit into the water.

Chapter End Notes

Oh look at that, things are happening, the exams are just around the corner, and we finally got Dabi and Himiko back on the scene.

Reunions are hard to write, I find, and this took a bit of tinkering to straighten out into what I wanted it do be, but here we are! Slowly piecing everything together as we go.

I have a lot of school stuff to handle so it's a short note today but know that I adore each and everyone of you.

I hope you enjoyed!

Rooftop Romance

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

She wakes up amidst limbs curled around her, Himiko muttering a sleepy protest as Katsuki jerked out of her grip.

But she hisses a short *bathroom* and Dabi grunts as she digs her knee into his midriff to slide off the bed before stumbling over the floor, nearly tripping but catching herself on the couch and pushing away from it as she lurched the last bit.

She fumbles to close the door behind her and lock it shut, nearly pulls the curtain down as she jerks it aside and collides shoulder first with the wall as she twisted the knob with a hiss as water spluttered out above her.

Katsuki presses her hand over her heart, gasping desperately for breath as the icy coldness stabs sharp inside of her, her world blurring and shifting and her eyes closing as she presses her forehead against the cool porcelain of the shower wall.

She grasps at the metal for something to hold onto as vertigo crept over her, followed by nausea, the water leaving pinpricks of aching cold as she all but collapsed against the wall, her cheek pressing hard against it, her breaths short and painful, the muscles contracting, a buzz of forgotten voices too close and too loud inside her mind.

She counts, desperately, knowing that it would pass, that she only had to wait it out, that it'd be *fine* because-

It's all in head, it's all in her *fucking head*-

-

Dabi opens his eyes when she returns, studying her wet form, boxers sticking to her thighs, hair messy from a rough towel drying, and exhaustion making her a bit wobbly where she stands in the middle of the room.

"Talking," Katsuki tells him with feeling. "Is fucking *bullshit*."

"Old memories?" Dabi rubs at the back of his neck with a yawn as he

slips off the bed, throwing the cover on top of Himiko who snuffles as she twists to curl around it.

"I don't even fucking know anymore," Katsuki says grumpily. "But it's fucking bullshit and I'm *sick* of it and I'm *sick* of feeling like I'm not in control of my own fucking *head* because it's *bullshit*."

"I think we have a bottle of rum left," he offers, fingers reaching out to touch the top of the scarred stretch of her chest with a little tap.

-

Dressed in one of Dabi's hoodies and her boxers Katsuki worms herself close against him to leech off his heat as he wrapped his arms loosely around her and rested his chin on her shoulder.

"Sorry," Katsuki mutters quietly as she cradles her glass of rum in her hands. "I haven't seen you since the last mess and I'm just the worst company apparently."

"You mean when you nearly killed yourself in some reckless self-sacrificial *bullshit*?" Dabi draws.

"Yeah, that." She scowls out at nothing in particular, feeling strangely itchy even with Dabi pressed close enough to soothe most of it anxiety beneath her skin away. "'s not my fault you were being an idiot though."

Really, she'd been going up against Endeavour enough times now to know that Dabi *might* have had a shot if Endeavour were already weakened. But full-strength?

Realistically, he wouldn't stand a fucking chance on his own.

Whether the idiot was prepared to admit to it was another thing entirely.

His arms tightens around her. "You're lucky," he murmurs against her ear, "that I'm fond of you."

"Sure," Katsuki snorts. "He's not about to forget about it anytime soon with that scar we left though." Her mouth curls as she pictures it. "It dips past the hem of his pants," she confides.

Dabi chokes on nothing, a strange snorting laugh following.

"Why do you know that?" he asks, eyes glittering as she tilts her head.

"Turns out your father is a bit of a prude," she says with a twitch of her lips.

"*Prude.*" Dabi tastes the word. "Endeavour is – Katsuki?"

She hums, taking a sip of her rum.

"You're going to have to give me a bit more than that," Dabi drawls, nudging at her with a bump of his chin.

-

"What was his face like?" Dabi asks her as she loops her noise cancelling headphones in place around her neck. "When he found out about your name change?"

They're outside, just at a cross section, the light still low and there's a beanie crammed on her head courtesy of Himiko.

"*You never know who is watching,*" she'd told Katsuki as she tucked tufts of blonde carefully beneath it before giving her head a pat with a sleepy smile.

Katsuki bares her teeth in cat-like satisfaction.

Dabi laughs quietly, leaning forward to steal one last kiss, her head tilting up as his hand framed her jaw, his lips chapped and a bit rough but also soft where they linger as she breathes in the scent of ash with a flare of her nose.

"I approve," he murmurs against her lips before pulling back and slipping his hands into his pockets. "Try not to get yourself into too much trouble."

"Ditto," Katsuki huffs, her breath coming out in a brief mist of cool morning air.

It feels strange to leave them there, Katsuki finds as she turns away, tucking her hands into the pockets of her stolen hoodie and hunkering down as she forces herself to move down the street and away.

But it's her own damn choice and Katsuki holds onto that as her hand clenches around the package of cigarettes in her pocket.

-

Katsuki scrubs tiredly at her face as she closes the door behind her,

kicking her shoes off and ignoring the slippers as she padded down the corridor to give the door to Fuyumi's room a knock.

A call and she cracks it open to find Fuyumi folding up clothes on her bed to be tucked away into the wardrobe.

"Can I borrow your phone, 'Yumi?" Katsuki leans against the door opening, peering idly around in the room, finding the same kind of OCD-like neatness that the Todoroki family seemed to suffer from.

"Of course." She straightens out and crosses the room to grab it from her desk. "Did something happen to yours?"

Katsuki pictures the sad drenched thing her phone had been after Dabi and Himiko dragged her into the water and scratches at her neck.

"Yeah," she admits, accepting it. "Mind if I call your brother from it?"

"I'm sure Shouto would like that." Fuyumi smiles at her and-

That hadn't exactly been Katsuki's angle with it but, that's fine, she decides.

"Father will be home in an hour," Fuyumi tells her as Katsuki moves to duck out and she pauses, turning wary eyes on the other as she presses her hands together. "I believe he wishes to discuss-

"I know," Katsuki interrupts her. "Thank you, for letting me know," she tacks on a bit grudgingly because she appreciates it.

Concern creases the corner of Fuyumi's eyes but-

She gives Katsuki one last strained smile and ducks her head while Katsuki closes the door shut with a short breath.

-

"Nee-ch-

"I'm not," Katsuki interrupts before it could get awkward, cigarette dangling from her fingers and gaze focused on the white gazebo at the back of the garden. "Is Mina there?"

There's a pause, long enough that Katsuki lifts the phone from her ear to check that the other hadn't hung up on her before she presses it back.

“Shouto?”

“Did you see him again?”

“What makes you ask that?” Katsuki wonders, squinting a bit at the early autumn sun, the chill of the air making her wish she’d thought to grab her jacket before stepping out.

“You sound happy,” Shouto says and there’s a thoughtful note to his voice.

“Maybe I’m just having such a grand time here that I’m overflowing with joy,” she says drily.

“I saw the news.” There’s a rustle and the distant sound of footsteps, a door opening and then closing. *“He’s not going to be happy with you.”*

“He seemed quite okay with it when he did me a favour the other day.” Though, that *favour* had done her little good, in the end. “It’s none of your fucking concern, I’m handling it,” she says with flat exasperation when Shouto remains tellingly silent in response.

“Natsuo is coming home tomorrow,” Shouto says instead of agreeing and Katsuki wonders if she should be offended she was being mistrusted by a sixteen-year-old.

“I’ll make sure he finds me alive.” Katsuki takes a drag of her cigarette and there’s a sound of distant, muffled voices and a rustle before-
“Mina?”

“Out,” Shinsou’s voice comes low and dry from the other end.

Katsuki pauses, smoke curling slow into her lungs with a crackle of the ember at the tip.

“Are you smoking again?” Katsuki exhales in a long smooth stream. *“Not that I’m judging or anything but Aizawa won’t be too impressed. He’s good at that whole making you feel guilty with just a look thing.”*

“Enjoying your domestic life with them then?” Katsuki shifts away from the door opening and slumps with her arms folded on the railing instead with a flick to get rid of the ash clinging to the end of the cigarette.

“... I never thanked you for that, did I?”

“For what?” Katsuki asks, brow furrowing.

"You're a bit hopeless, aren't you?" Katsuki opens her mouth- "But yeah, it's... different. But, it's a good different. It's a bit odd with them being my teachers still and all but Aizawa is really firm on the whole, at school I'm your teacher, thing." Shinsou's voice lowers in an eerie imitation of Aizawa that makes her mouth twitch despite herself. *"What about you? It must be strange living with Todoroki's family."* There's a question there. *"He won't say much about them when we ask."*

"His sister is sweet," Katsuki tells him, taking another drag of her cigarette.

There's an expectant silence on the other end that Katsuki refuses to indulge.

"You're as open and prone to sharing as always." Shinsou's voice comes thick with sarcasm. *"I'll tell Mina that then. Todoroki's sister is sweet. Nothing about the father or brother or what you've been up to-"*

"Only met the brother once." Katsuki leans her chin on her folded arms on top of the railing. "Seems to be the decent sort. What more do you want me to say?"

"We hardly see you anymore, Katsuki." It's still a bit odd hearing her name from him but she doesn't comment on it. *"I know you have a hard time getting it through into your brain but we're just a bit concerned about you considering everything that's been going on."*

"I'm fine," Katsuki says a tad sourly.

"And yet somehow I have a hard time believing that. Mina told me about your parents-"

"His parents."

"Yours for the past eight years." She crushes the cigarette in the palm of her hand with a sizzle that she barely feels. *"I might be younger than you but I'm not an idiot so don't treat me like one."*

Katsuki's mouth curls.

"Just – we're still your friends." Shinsou's voice doesn't soften, exactly, but something about his tone makes her second guess her snappish response. *"I get that you can't come visit us but at least try to call."*

She clenches and unclenches her jaw, reaching for calm against the buzzing irritation beneath her skin.

“Katsuki?”

“I hear ya,” she says shortly. “I’ll – I’ll try,” she gets out stiffly.

“That’s good.” Silence stretches out between them. *“Why did you call anyway?”* Shinsou asks after a moment.

“My phone drowned,” Katsuki says flatly.

“Ah.” A pause. *“I’ll just grab Hagakure then, she should have all the numbers.”* Shinsou covers the mouth as he calls, getting a distant response from a familiar voice. *“We’ll see each other next week then?”* he checks, sounding just a smidge sheepish.

“I’ll try not to die before then,” Katsuki responds drily.

-

Endeavour is... not in a good mood when he gets home.

Katsuki eyes him as he steps into the training area, shifting slowly as he unbuttoned his shirt and shrugged it off, his mouth in a thin harsh line and muscles coiled tense beneath his skin as he slowly folded it up to place aside.

Dangerous, her mind hisses but there’s anticipation there as well, her heartbeat quickening even as she kept her breathing calm and slow as she straightened to her full height, flexing her fingers and toes as she loosened the control over her sweat glands, one foot shifting back.

“I take it your meeting with All Might didn’t go as expected.” Endeavour’s voice is low, a rumbling façade of false calm as he focuses on her with eyes as turquoise as Dabi’s and yet nothing like them.

“What makes you say that?” Katsuki wonders, eyes never leaving him as the heat in the room slowly picked up, prickling at her neck and making her mouth dry out.

“He called me.” Endeavour rolls his neck. “Always sticking his nose into places where it doesn’t belong.”

“That,” Katsuki growls, eyes gleaming, “is something we can actually fucking agree on.”

“And you.” Endeavour’s voice is still low and it makes her skin itch because she knows that sort of calm anger. “You’ve been stretching your freedom as well, haven’t you?” His eyes meets hers. “Spending

money that weren't yours to spend under *my* name."

"Not been enjoying the spotlight?" Katsuki bares her teeth. "Imagine, people thinking the best of you. Must be quite the change of pace for you, *old man*."

The heat flares up and the next breath through her nose is so dry she feels the skin tear.

She wipes at it with her wrist and Endeavour's eyes dips to the smear, heat simmering down just a notch, dangerous but waiting for an excuse as more blood drips down her nose and over her lip and finally from her chin to fall against the mat.

"It played out in my favour this time." He takes a step towards her. "But you don't like me so I find myself wondering why. So why don't you explain it to me, *girl*."

He towers over her, large and broad and dangerous, and Katsuki stands with her back straight and chin tilted up.

She refuses to step back, to cower, to show any sign of weakness.

"I'm going to be working for you, aren't I?" Katsuki licks blood away from her lip, baring her teeth. "Not fucking All Might, not- not any of those other Heroes but *you*. And your reputation? It fucking *sucks*." The heat picks up again and she suppresses a cough with a dry wheeze. "You're not All Might but you're not supposed to be so I thought-" The skin in her nose breaks further, blood running down to fall in a pitter-patter against the mat as she blinks dry eyes. "I thought I'd fucking do something about it since you refuse to be fucking *smart* about it."

She wipes at her nose but only smears it over her lips and nose and wrist as the heat reluctantly simmers down.

"You chose to drag me into this," Katsuki snaps with a swallow. "It's not just your fucking reputation on the line and people are damn busy dragging me so I saw an opportunity and I fucking *took it*." She glowers at him. "You're filthy rich, it's ridiculous, no-one needs so much fucking money they don't realise *thousands* has just disappeared from their damn account!"

"Is that so?" Endeavour steps closer, so close now that Katsuki can *smell him*, ash and dust and something that brings her mind to steel but also the unmistakable musk of some sort of cologne.

“Yes,” she growls, wary and tense where she stands.

“You forget your place.” The scar on his face stands out starkly and she clenches her jaw. “You’re here because of *my* goodwill-“

“I’m *here* because you have some sort of fucking use for me!” Katsuki snarls. “Don’t pretend you’re doing this out of the goodness of your fucking heart because we both know that’s not-“

Endeavour lashes out suddenly, too fast for Katsuki to react as her chin was grabbed and squeezed as he jerked her up and close as he bent over her, her bone aching in protest as her hands curled around his wrist, nails digging down and heart pounding as she was forced up on her toes.

But as she looks into his eyes it’s not fear that burns through her but anger, livid and hot beneath her skin as she narrows her own.

“Tell me something.” Endeavour is so close that she feels the warmth of his breath, her blood dripping to pool in the palm of his hand. “Why do you believe I take time out of my schedule every day to deal with you in person?”

“You mean you’re not doing it because you enjoy beating the crap out of me?” Katsuki gets out, jaw aching as his grip tightened.

“I suppose it’s too much to expect you to pick up on it on your own.” Endeavour’s mouth curls mockingly and Katsuki snarls, foot jerking up, and explosion ringing out loud before she was being twisted around and thrown across the mat, rolling and colliding hard with the wall.

She pushes up, chest rising and falling hard in the heat of the room, lungs burning.

“A woman,” Endeavour drawls. “And yet in some ways yet a child.”

Chapter End Notes

Woof, life has been busy but here I am! Back with a new chapter!

And with the next one we kick off the Provisional Exam I do believe? Can you believe it? Only fifty chapters to reach it, we’re doing so well.

Katsuki is dealing with a lot as usual. For someone who struggles

so desperately to have some sort of control over her life it's not ideal to dredge up things her mind struggles to handle and she's being screwed over by life on top of that.

But at least she had a bit of a break with our favourite duo.

Is there any better way to bond than over shared resentment of an authority figure?

And they say romance is dead, hah!

I'm truly exhausted so I'm gonna swing to bed on that note. I'm a bit late on replying again but I'll catch up with you guys, things have just been stressful lately so I haven't found the time to write as I'd like to. But I do so adore you guys and your support and comments brightens my days.

I'm artsy-death on tumblr if you want to say hi there and this has been chapter 50 of In The End.

I hope you enjoyed!

Small World

Chapter Notes

Half-n-Half = Todoroki Shouto

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Katsuki pauses in the entrance to her room and has a moment of *why the fuck doesn't anyone ever knock* followed by *maybe he did* and weighing if it was reasonable to be annoyed or not considering she'd been in the shower.

Settles for not feeling either way about it and drops her towel on the floor as she reaches into the wardrobe to grab some clothes as Natsuo clicks the flip knife he'd pulled from her bedside table with a startled noise as a curved red blade shot out.

Katsuki shrugs into a t-shirt and then the hoodie she'd stolen from Dabi, dark purple and still smelling faintly of ash, and yanks the jeans up her hips, foregoing socks.

"Should I be worried about you having a small arsenal by your bed?" he asks her, sounding faintly amused and not at all concerned as he pressed the blade back and dropped it into the drawer.

"We all have our vices." Katsuki leans back against the door of the tall wardrobe behind her after pulling it shut. "Why are you here?"

"Endeavour," and it's a curious thing, to address his father in such a way, and it remains her faintly of Dabi for all that there's little else that strikes her to be shared between them, "wanted to take you to grab your things for the exam on Monday but I volunteered take you instead."

He looks at her, eyes grey and not turquoise, his hair white and not black, two little ridiculous bangs flopping at the top of his forehead.

She tilts her head, considering him.

-

"So, *Touya*." Natsuo drives a ridiculously *safe* car in a soft blue that matches his jacket and Katsuki has her elbow shoved out the window, feeling the air ruffle her hair as she watches the people they drive by.

“How have you been enjoying your stay?”

“Katsuki is fine.” She glances towards him. “I’m an asshole but not *that* much of a fucking asshole.”

“Only to *him*.” There’s something dark and old and angry in the derisiveness of his voice. “Is that the only reason you chose it?” he asks, fingers pausing their drumming on the wheel. “You have my approval either way, I’m certain Touya would have loved it. He liked pushing out father’s buttons, for all that it rarely turned out well.”

Katsuki has already gotten Dabi’s approval on it and doesn’t much care beyond it, but she supposes she appreciates the sentiment.

“*Heroes*,” she tastes the word carefully, “should be reminded of their faults and screw-ups. The rest of the world might be interested in shoving it under the rug and forget all about it but it’s fucked up that the disappearance of a child hardly made the news.” She bares her teeth because-

She’d *looked*, she fucking *had*, and the media had portrayed is an *unfortunate happening* with support for Endeavour whose picture had dominated the page with a small portrait of a young Dabi in the very corner, unsmiling with the person with the arm around him cut out of the picture.

Nothing about the rest of the family save for a mention of names of those *left behind*.

“You have a very cynical view on Heroes for someone who wants to become one,” Natsuo comments as they take a right turn down the street.

Want, isn’t exactly how Katsuki would frame it but she grimaces because – she’d gotten herself into the mess of things entirely on her own and now she just had to make the fucking best of it.

Hero, Villain or get herself shipped off to jail, her life choices might need some reevaluating.

“What do you know of Touya?”

Katsuki pauses because, objectively, she probably knew more about his brother than he did but also-

“I doubt Fuyumi would bring him up, she feels the most responsible

out of us for what happened.” Natsuo’s brow dips, his eyes on the road ahead. “She’s always been compassionate, for better and worse, and for all that I wouldn’t want her to change she doesn’t blame our father nearly enough for what happened.” His grip on the wheel tightens. “Shouto was too young and Mom is...” Natsuo breathes out. “I doubt you’ve met her, for all that she’s doing better now she’s not really ready to leave the hospital yet.”

Katsuki slowly detaches herself from the window, turning towards him.

“You actually remind me a bit of him,” Natsuo admits and the look in his eyes when he glances towards her is hard to read. “Stubborn and with very little self-preservation.” His mouth ticks up, fond, nostalgic, and Katsuki shifts because-

“He was kind.” Natsuo’s smile is warm but there’s also a twist of pain in it. “Always did his best to look after the rest of us. He was... distant during the last months before he died. He stopped smiling completely and would lock himself in his room for long hours, only letting Mom inside after she’d spend hours outside his door.”

They slow down at a red light and Katsuki tries her very best not to show how uncomfortable she feels as she stares at the old lady slowly making her way across with her arm in the crook of a younger woman on the phone.

“Touya... is a sore spot in our family,” Natsuo says finally and his mouth dips down. “I want to believe you know what you’re doing but you’ve stepped into a minefield and you’re not the only one being impacted by your choices. Fuyumi... she sounds happier on the phone when I speak to her, and I appreciate that you’re picking up some of her tasks around the house and getting her *out of it*. But her heart is big and she worries about you and so does Shouto, if the text I received the other day says anything.”

Fucking Half-n-Half-

“Touya isn’t the only one you remind me of.” And Katsuki stills because she doesn’t like the look in his eyes one bit. “My father has a temper, he’s selfish and he arranges the rest of the world around his own goals. We were never more than pieces in his gamble to become the Number One Hero.”

The car slowly rolls into motion and Katsuki stares down at her hands, shoulders drawn tight.

“I think my father sees himself in you, in some ways.” Natsuo’s voice is guarded, careful. “I think you should be mindful of just what that implies if you continue down the path you’re on.”

Katsuki clenches her jaw.

-

Todoroki Natsuo is giving her a fucking *whiplash* and Katsuki is twitchy and uncomfortable and does very much *not want to be here anymore* and yet she forces herself to follow along stiffly as he browses through the store, his tone light as he keeps up a steady stream of chatter.

Katsuki clenches her hand around the earphone near her throat but does not put them on as Natsuo holds up a flat yellow box of lock-pick tools that he slides into the basket after some consideration.

She does not know how to pick locks but she forces herself to think of Himiko who likely does, picturing yellow eyes and loose blonde hair, large green earphones and a too large t-shirt in front of the television screen those months ago during her first internship under Best Jeanist.

There’s other stuff too, a lot of it things she could see no reasonable use for, some that might actually make it into one of her pouches, and she reaches out to snag a package of tampons in the first-aid section as Natsuo is deliberating over the different kits.

“I just need bandages,” she says shortly as he turns towards her. “Needle and thread. Stuff that works on the field. I’m not about to stop and put a fucking *band-aid* on.”

“But they’re cute.” He holds up a box of kitten printed ones. “And you never know when you’ll happen upon a child in distress.”

He drops it into the basket.

Katsuki presses her palm against her jeans, feeling strangely self-conscious about her anger as he smiles at her.

“Lighten-up.” Natsuo picks up a small flat flashlight and gives it a spin before putting it back. “You look like I’m about to stab you.” He holds up a finger, ice forming a tiny point that he branded at her, jokingly, Katsuki knows and yet-

She’s already jerked back, stiff and uncomfortable in her own skin as

his smile falls, and the ice melts to drip against the floor.

“Look.” Natsuo drags his hand down his face. “I’ve seen what my father is capable of. He made something dark and distant out of Touya and you’re spending a lot of time with him. He’s interested in you which means you fit into whatever scheme he’s planned out and I just want you to be careful. I didn’t say what I said to be cruel but he’s-“ Natsuo rubs at his jaw. “I told you, you remind me of Touya, and in some ways Touya was the most like our father and the least like him at the same time.”

Dabi, Katsuki knows, would not appreciate such a comparison at all.

“You’re clever, and a bit of a smartass, according to Fuyumi. But it’s dangerous to underestimate him because you’re not the only one with an agenda and Endeavour... Just be on your guard, is what I’m trying to say.”

He reaches out, giving her shoulder an awkward pat.

“For what it’s worth you seem to have done well so far and I’m glad Fuyumi has you on her side.”

They look towards the owner of the shop as she returned with a large box that she places on the counter with a sigh of relief as she stretched out her back with a crack.

“Order for one Todoroki Enji!”

Natsuo steps past her and Katsuki reaches out to grab one last thing off the shelves as she follows him.

-

“What about this one?”

“What the fuck am I supposed to do with apples and ramen *exactly* do you imagine?”

“I eat it all the time at college.” Natsuo presses the bag of apples insistently towards the basket as she shoves it further behind herself and out of his reach. “It’s all about being creative and trying new things and it’s good for you!”

“Keep your nasty food combinations to yourself and don’t inflict it on others,” Katsuki says flatly. “Make yourself useful and grab some

fucking lemons instead.”

To her consternation Natsuo pauses, looking thoughtful.

“I’m not putting in the fucking ramen!” she growls at him. “It’s for the damn *salad* now go.”

“Aye, aye!” He snaps a salute with a twitch of his lips and obligingly back-tracks down the aisle, apples tucked under his arm.

“What’s with people being absolutely fucking *useless* in the kitchen?” Katsuki grumbles, kicking a small stepping stool down the shelves before hoisting herself up on it and stretching up to snag a bottle of soy sauce before jumping off it.

She mentally sorts through the list of what needed to be refilled and replaced and bought for the weekly shopping and rounds the corner without looking and promptly runs smack-dab into someone with a startled jerk back, the food in her basket rustling.

The other isn’t quite so lucky and Katsuki watches items scatter and roll down by her feet with a twitch.

“You’re-” Her head snaps up to find a man with messy short blond hair in a white tank-top and tan jacket, deep bags beneath his eyes, a deep set furrow in his forehead, and scruff on his jaw.

To her surprise he’s staring at her, looking rather like he’d seen a ghost.

“Do I know you?” Katsuki asks warily as she bends down to snatch up a package of onigiri, noting that nearly everything was ready made food, the kind to be thrown in the microwave or eaten cold and served in front of the television.

He coughs, turning away from her.

“No – no, of course not!” His voice is suspiciously high. “I just – recognised you from the television. That’s right! You’re that- you’re working for Endeavour!”

Katsuki narrows her eyes because – there’s something familiar in his jerky movement as he scrambled to pick up what he’d dropped, accepting what she hands him with a mumbled thank you, keeping his face turned away.

She leans forward, nose flaring, and he makes a twitchy little movement back from her, arm rising and-

"Twice?" she hisses, eyes widening. "You're-" His hand slaps down hard on her mouth, looking nervous and part-way like he was inching into something panicked as she dug her fingers into his to pry them off. "I'm not about to tell anyone you idiot. Calm down," she snaps in annoyance.

"Why are you even *here*?" He demands, pupils shrunk into pin-pricks. "I always shop here and you've never- you're not supposed to be here!" He's lowered his voice, his face shoving close to hers. **"Why are you here you-"**

"Katsuki?" Twice jerks away from her and Katsuki breathes hard through her nose as she turns towards Natsuo. "Everything okay here?" He looks between her and Twice, a bag of lemons dangling from his fingers, apples tucked beneath his arm.

"Just happened upon an old friend," Katsuki grumbles with a warning glance at the Villain.

Twice makes a twitchy sort of motion with his free arm that might have been a wave.

"This is Natsuo, I'm staying with his family at the moment." She jerks her chin towards him as he takes a slow step forward.

"Jin," Twice blurts out and then looks immediately like he hates himself for saying anything.

"We used to be in the same therapy group," Katsuki lies.

Twice looks at her with too wide eyes and then nods frantically.

"It's... nice to meet you. Jin, was it?" Natsuo shifts the lemons and then reaches out to offer his hand.

Twice stares at it, looking rather like he didn't know what to do with it, and Katsuki's general exasperation with the entirety of the League of Villains makes itself reminded.

"It was for anxiety, he doesn't do well with new people," she tacks on.

Natsuo slowly withdraws his hand and then smiled instead. "I see," he says and Katsuki very much doubts he *sees* anything at all. "That's

okay, we all have our troubles! I'm glad you're getting help for it."

"A-ah," Twice agrees, bobbing his head with a swallow. "I'm- I should get going but it was... nice... to see you-"

"Amélie?"

Katsuki's mind halts and her eyes stops somewhere on Twice's chin as something twists hard and cold and panicked inside her gut.

Her shoulders draw tight as she curls tight on herself, slowly glancing to find Masaru staring at her with a basket of food in the crook of his arm and-

I have the shittiest fucking luck, Katsuki thinks even as she jerks back, her back colliding against Twice as *his* father takes a single step towards her.

"You must be mistaken." It's Natsuo and Katsuki feels Twice hesitantly touch two fingers against her lower back, out of sight from the other two as she pressed herself against him, wanting nothing more than to disappear. "There's no-one by that name here."

Masaru looks to her but Natsuo plants himself in front of her, partway shielding her, and Katsuki-

Katsuki's mind is blank, refusing to grasp at anything past the realisation that *he's here, he's here, he's here and-*

"Jin." Twice's head snaps up. "Why don't you take Katsuki outside for a bit? Just leave your things in the basket, I'll pay for it."

There's a moment and then a hand is curling around her bicep, the other removing the basket from the crook of her arm and placing it down on the floor, the instant food slipped into it and-

Masaru is-

-

Katsuki crouches against the wall of the alley, Twice lingering anxious and frowning as he kept a look out, an unlit cigarette clenched between his teeth and fingers fiddling with the lighter.

"What was that about?"

"Apparently some people don't take too well to learning their son has

been replaced with a dead woman.” Katsuki’s voice comes out hollow and distant to her own ears.

“Oh.” Twice pauses. “I thought you were staying with Endeavour because of the whole-“ He gestures to his face.

“I am.” Katsuki leans her head back. “But I don’t exactly have anywhere else to go either.”

“I’m sorry.”

It’s a strange thing to hear from him and Katsuki huffs tiredly, closing her eyes.

“Amélie – it was your name then, before you died?”

“I have bits of both of them.” Katsuki glances towards him. “But yeah, that was her name.”

“I saw – on the news, your new name. It suits you.” There’s something... not quieter, but, more subdued about Twice like this, outside his mask, the twitchiness exaggerated in the way his fingers keeps flickering, as if counting. “Knowing and understanding yourself is important.”

It had struck her, the first time she met Twice, that she probably had more in common with him than most and the sentiment echoes something inside of her as she forces her shoulders to relax.

“Yeah,” she agrees. “I’m... working on it.”

“Do you hear them?” he wonders. “You identify as a woman so she-she must be the stronger personality but – do you *hear* them.”

“Sometimes,” Katsuki admits. “Sometimes louder, sometimes quieter, and when I dissociate I slip more into what she was.”

“But not the boy.”

“No.” She glances towards the package of cigarettes sticking out of his pocket and he takes the hint, throwing it towards her. “His voice is the strongest when I see the people he knew.”

“Like his parents.”

She sticks a cigarette between her lips, framing it in her palm and popping a small smatter of explosions to light it up before inhaling,

letting the smoke curl into her lungs.

It's not the kind Dabi favours and she grimaces at the taste as she exhales.

"Yes." She lets the cigarette dangle from her fingers.

"How... did you realise you're *you*?" There's something in the way that he frames the question that makes her brow furrow as she looks at him. "You're aware of both of them and yet you place yourself as something separate."

"Hell if I know." Katsuki's mouth curls down. "I've decided that it's the only thing that makes sense because they're *dead* and *I'm* the one who is fucking alive and dealing with the crappy aftermath of it. I'm *not* Amélie because I have his memories too so I'm both of them and not either of them."

She scrubs a tired hand over her face and-

"I understand," Twice says and perhaps he does, she thinks. "You weren't meant to see me like this."

Katsuki snorts. "'s not like I'll tell anyone."

"You'll make a strange Hero," Twice says and he's not smiling, exactly, his face doesn't look like it knows how to; too tired and too haggard. "If it comes to that."

"Still on about that?" Katsuki takes another drag of the cigarette and then gives up with a wrinkle of her nose, snuffing it out against the ground.

"There isn't anywhere a crazy person can belong."

She pauses.

"The League... are the first to accept me. You understand, don't you?" And there's something almost desperate and frail in the way his mouth tilts up at the corner as he looks at her. "Heroes don't save people like you and me, it's not how the world works."

He gives a small jerk and with one last look at her he ducks out of the alley, snatching the bag Natsuo holds out for him as he passes him by, and Katsuki stares after before looking to the other who isn't smiling.

She sighs as she pushes away from the bricks.

-

“Maybe we should start a club,” Natsuo says in the car on the way back as Katsuki’s once again staring out the window, elbow propped on top of it and chin pressed against the fold of her arms. “One of bad father-“

“He’s the best,” Katsuki interrupts him without bothering to look at him. “He loved his son, would have done anything for him. I’m just... not him.”

She pictures the shade of his brown hair, the slant of his eyes, the curved edges of his glasses-

“I’m sorry.”

Masaru is kind, that’s one of the first things Katsuki comes to understand of him, a steady and grounding pillar in the mess her life had become after dying and waking up.

He’s kind and she’s cruel as she allows him to love a stranger clad in his son’s skin.

Chapter End Notes

I’m a filthy liar - next chapter kicks off the exam.

Natsuo is being a good brother in this chapter - it's not easy being in the seat he's in and Katsuki is, ultimately, a stranger even if he on some level understand and approves what she's doing even if he doesn't know the motivation behind it. He's also the most confrontational out of the Todoroki siblings (Dabi excluded) and the most removed from the situation while very much aware of it.

Perhaps it's cruel to make a comparison between Dabi and Endeavour but Dabi holds fiercely to the anger and hatred of the child he was while Natsuo watched him take those first steps down the path before, you know, dying, as far as he's aware. Fuyumi is far more likely to look at those memories with forgiveness, it's in her nature and we remember the best of those we miss, and Shouto was too young to understand the entirety of the situation.

So. Natsuo. (We'll get to Rei, as well, speaking of Todoroki's, I've tagged her up for a reason, it's turned into a real Todoroki party this).

And of course, since it's me, we'll be exploring more of how Touya became Dabi because that's what we do in this story - complicating things into reason.

And we had some Twice!

(And of course, in this story we do not forget about Masaru and Mitsuki but... it's complicated, my friends).

And on that I'm off to answer some comments! I'm artsy-death on tumblr if you want to say hi there and this has been chapter 51 of In The End.

I hope you enjoyed!

The Provisional Hero Exam pt. 1

Chapter Notes

Shitty Hair = Kirishima

Sparky = Kaminari

See Through = Hagakure

Loudmouth = Yoarashi Inasa

Fake = Shindo Yo

《Hey》 = sign-language

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Katsuki frowns at the mirror, not entirely sure what to feel.

Ultimately, there wasn't a lot of changes made to her suit. It is still the same black pants, metal knee-guards and sturdy boots. Belt strapped in place around her thighs and waist in dark green, pouches secured.

But the black shirt had been replaced by a long-sleeved and high-collared black one that covered up the scar on her chest with the same orange X.

In the box there had also been a thicker coat clearly meant for winter in the same style.

It's sensible for the weather, she has no complaints about it, and the aesthetic of it went with her original suit but-

The headphones she had *not* requested when Endeavour first brought up that she needed new gear. Black with orange X on the covers, a dial hidden on the back to adjust the volume around her, and doubling as a communication device which meant she could wear them on patrol.

She had not thought anyone would approve such a thing if she requested it.

It bothers her that Endeavour had gone out of his way to secure them for her.

"I AM SO! VERY! SORRY!"

Katsuki takes one look at the gathering of 1-A, the strange teen bowing with loud flair, and turns on her heel only to be snagged by the back of her collar and yanked back.

"I do not have time to babysit you," Endeavour rumbles as she tugs herself out of his grip. "I am sponsoring you but Eraserhead has volunteered to keep an eye on you so you will remain with your old classmates."

"I don't need something to fucking *babysit* me," Katsuki growls.

"You're under my care and thus my responsibility. I will not appear incompetent because of your ego." He looks at her, arms folding broad over his chest, ignoring the whispers and eyes on them as she scowls. "You will pass," he tells her and Katsuki tenses because it's not nothing short of a demand. "Try not to make a fool out of yourself."

Katsuki clenches her teeth. "Fuck off, old man." She steps back from him. "Not even going to say hello to your own son?" she mocks as he remains in place.

Endeavour narrows his eyes and Katsuki knows that it's only the fact that they're very public that saves her hide as she scoffs and turns, dragging her feet as she approached the spectacle that 1-A had made of itself.

Shiketsu High, Katsuki recognises the school uniforms to belong to one of the few Hero schools whose fame mirrored that of U.A.

She pauses at Aizawa's expression because there's a frown and strange consideration as he looks at the loudmouth despite the fact that the idiot is bleeding from his forehead where he'd slammed it onto the ground when bowing and *in what fucking world is that normal behaviour?*

Katsuki smells *trouble*.

She promptly makes a wide turn, feeling Endeavour's eyes digging into her back as she scanned through the crowd until she snagged on familiar pink hair and ducked in, ignoring the surprised exclamations of her name as she sidled past them and meeting golden eyes as Mina swivelled around towards her.

"Hey," she mutters as Mina reaches out to grasp her wrist, tugging her

up beside her and wrapping her arms around hers.

“Aizawa-sensei told us you’d be saddled with us today on the way here,” Mina says in a hush that there really was no need for because the loudmouth was drawing enough attention that Katsuki’s entrance had barely been noticed.

“About time you got here,” Shinsou comments, peering at her with lidded eyes. “Thought you’d gotten lost.”

Katsuki stares at him, mildly wary about the device around his neck and the white scarf that was a clear copy of Aizawa’s. She supposes it’s a sensible choice to have a weapon to trap his target with considering his quirk but she does *not* want it anywhere near her.

“I’m on your side,” Shinsou reminds her as she averts her eyes from it. “Relax.”

Mina tightens her grip on her. “Are you excited?” she asks to divert the conversation. “I can’t believe we’re practically becoming real Heroes today!”

“Only if we pass,” Katsuki reminds her, eyeing the Shiketsu student as he departed. “Who was he anyway?”

“Yaorashi Inasa,” Shinsou shrugs. “Imagine a Todoroki two-point-oh but in Shiketsu clothing.”

“Weird or not he’s the real deal,” Aizawa is saying at the front, his eyes lingering on her. “Keep an eye on him.”

If the mere possibility of actually interaction with Loudmouth didn’t give her hives Katsuki might be interested in what going up against him might actually entail.

“Touya, come here.” She slips out of Mina’s hold and steps up to Aizawa who gives her a critical once-over. “You’re staying close to us today. You have any questions or need help with something you turn to me, Vlad or Present Mic who is around here somewhere.” A pause. “Try not to get yourself into too much trouble.” She scowls at him and he reaches out to pat her shoulder.

“I can’t believe we’re all here!” Shitty Hair enthuses. “Class 1-A together again!” He pumps his fist, See Through’s glove copying him, and there’s several bright grins levelled towards her which makes her sink into the collar of her jacket to hide the colour creeping up her

cheeks because *fucking kids*.

“Eraser? Is that really you, Eraser!?” A bright bubbly voice reaches them and several of her classmates swivel around towards it while Katsuki watches Aizawa’s face practically flatline. “I saw you on TV at the Sports Festival. It’s been too long since we last met face-to-face!”

Green hair, orange scarf, and an ensemble that spoke of little fashion sense.

Katsuki looks to her and recognises her.

Katsuki’s back collides up against Shinsou’s chest before she ducks behind him because *fuck no*.

“Let’s get married!” The bright smiling woman is procuring a flower as Katsuki peers over Shinsou’s shoulder and *what the actual fuck*-

“No thanks,” Aizawa says flatly, sounding rather like he wanted nothing to do with the situation, and she feels for him, she does, her empathy has never been higher.

“That’s Ms Joke!” Mini Might’s voice is excited and Katsuki has the stray thought of *he sounds cheery* before he continued because- “Her quirk is Outburst! She can force those around her to start laughing uncontrollably, effectively slowing their thoughts and movement!”

Katsuki has a slow moment of dawning horror as she turns her head to look at Mina who looks absolutely *gleeful*.

“Scared of a bit of *laughter*, Katsuki?” She wiggles her brows, teeth gleaming with the stretch of her smile. “Can you imagine it, Hitoshi? I don’t think I’ve ever heard Katsuki *laugh*.” A pause. “That’s a bit sad, actually.” She mutters to herself, peering thoughtfully towards Ms Joke.

“If you draw her fucking attention you’re *dead*,” Katsuki hisses, ducking lower beneath Shinsou.

“I’m not that evil,” Mina giggles. “But your reaction is *adorable*.”

“Don’t worry,” Shinsou drawls as he reached a hand over his head to pat it against her hair. “We’ll protect you from having some joy in your life.”

Katsuki growls but as she peers over Shinsou’s shoulder the woman’s

head is moving in her general direction and she sinks down firmly out of sight.

Ignoring the on-goings Katsuki peers about, frowning a bit at the sheer number of kids around her.

She'd checked the statistics of the provisional exam beforehand and All Might's loss of power, as well as the the rise of the League, clearly had people anxious because there was at *least* three times over the average gathered.

Shiketsu, U.A., any Hero school worth its grain of salt had its students flown in to take the exam and she's not entirely sure she likes it.

Heroes had a lot of leeway with laws, in ways that generally had her uncomfortable, and while there were restrictions with a *provisional* Hero licence there were always some kids who were *not* ready to handle that kind of power trip.

Fuck all of this, Katsuki thinks, wondering if there was a way to just... weed a majority of them out.

Was she allowed to do that? *Could* she do that while still grabbing a passing grade for herself? What was even the measurements for passing someone as a Hero? Was she expected to play *nice*?

Katsuki has the mental picture of herself smiling brightly, cape flapping behind her, and promptly shoves it deep down with a shiver.

“- Best of all, here's Bakugou who was at the heart of the whole Kamino mess!”

Katsuki has clearly missed something because there's a weird bright guy that makes her think *Fake* because he's approaching her with a grin that is nowhere near sincere as Shinsou gives her a nudge.

“You've got the strongest will of all.” Katsuki's mouth curls down, not liking the look in his eyes *one bit*. “I'm so glad we get a chance to face guys of your calibre today.” Fake, fake, so fucking *fake*. “We're going to give it our-“

“Cut the crap,” Katsuki growls. “Your lips can flap all they want but you're full of *shit*.”

“Katsuki!” Mina squeaks, aghast.

“Hey!” Katsuki tenses as Shitty Hair steps up. “For one, her name is Touya, not Bakugou, and two – sorry she’s so rude, man.”

Katsuki twitches.

“Be nice.” Mina elbows her with a hiss. “He was complimenting you!”

“I wouldn’t be so sure about that.” Shouto’s brow is furrowed as he sidles up beside them. “I don’t trust his intentions.”

Katsuki gives him a *you see* gesture and Mina gives her arm a pinch.

“Not everyone is out to get you,” she murmurs but she does give Fake a furrowed look where he was chatting up Shitty Hair and a small crowd of their class.

“We sure are drawing a lot of attention though,” Shinsou mutters quietly, peering around as a girl approached Shouto for a fucking *autograph*.

Katsuki drags her headphones over her ears, quite *done*.

-

The guy from the Heroes Safety Commission looks half-dead where the stands at the front of the crowd and Katsuki finds herself squished between Shinsou and Mina, for which she’s *grateful*, but she’s also quite sure she wants Endeavour quite truly dead for getting her into this fucking situation in the first place.

“Today’s society is saturated with Heroes and ever since Stain’s capture plenty of people out there have raised doubt about the role Heroes should play. The title of Hero should not be given to those who seek reward and recompense but should be earned through tireless self-sacrifice.”

But even so she finds herself listening and sorting through the words being spoken, ignoring the whispers around her as she frowns.

*“That said, as far as individuals go, motivations aside, telling those who risk their lives in order to save others to ask for **nothing** in return would be rather harsh, especially in modern society. So whether it’s done for compensation or out of dedication to the cause, we have no shortage of Heroes out there working to save people and put Villains away.”*

Objectively, Katsuki disagrees.

Tireless self-sacrifice might have been a Hero worthy thing in her world

but in this world it's a fucking *job*.

People didn't need to be idealistic to do a good job, she rather thought that some people were idealistic to a fault and had absolutely zero business being one.

The fault of the whole Heroes and Villains mentality – people weren't *good* because they had a title slapped onto them and judging people as Villains was dehumanizing in a way that generally didn't sit well with her.

Villain implied *evil* and being *evil* implied that the *good Hero* was automatically in the right which is not how the world fucking *works*. It erased any sort of redeeming quality and Katsuki finds it fucked-up on so many levels.

Dabi and Himiko aside, because she's fucking *biased*, there were people out there who made shitty choices because they're born into shitty fucking situations and screwing up and making bad choices is just fucking *human*. Sure a lot of them deserved jail time but-

Becoming tagged with the epithet of *Villain* was as good as a free for all when it came to whatever the fuck Heroes wanted to do to them.

Not to mention that because a shit load of it was fucking televised *Villains* had a damn hard time making it back to society which just stuffed them further into a place of desperation and forcing them to make the same damn choices again.

Idealism, black and white morality, maybe it was just fucking better if people weren't so fucking sold on the idea of being a Hero and its *goodness*.

Dedication to the cause, Katsuki doesn't like it.

"Nowadays, the amount of time it takes to solve any given incident is incredibly short-"

*And you think that's something to encourage? Just blast in, beat up the Villain, hurray, the Heroes saved the **fucking day**!*

She looks to the side, nausea rising through her at the serious and enraptured faces around her, and clenches her fists as she glares down at her feet.

“If they wanna play,” Katsuki growls as she slaps the targets in place in plain sight on her chest as she marches into the arena. “I’m gonna *fucking* play.”

-

Katsuki slides low, pitching the ball with a crackle of an explosion, and it collides hard enough to break bones, she knows, but she doesn’t *fucking care* as she twists, catching the two balls shooting towards her and baring her teeth in a snarl as she pivots and shoots them back with a *ding!* as the plates turned red to a startled look as the last boy stumbled back.

Who the fuck puts a target on their fucking head? She launches a third ball, purely out of spite, and the plate lightens up with another cheerful *ding!* as his head snapped back before his back collided against the ground, out cold.

Most of 1-A had remained as targets in the middle of it all, like idiots, and Katsuki had bailed early because she’s *not* a fucking idiot and if they want to play together they can play together, that’s on them.

Mina likely won’t be too impressed by her disappearance but considering the absolute *mayhem* she’d left behind Katsuki is quite confident she’ll be too busy to spend her much thought.

She’s not a team player, she’s not interested in being one, and yet-

“Why,” she growls as she turns around, “the *fuck* are you two following me?”

Sparky laughs nervously, hand rubbing against the back of his neck, and she can’t *fucking see* See Through other than the floating targets on her but she can practically *feel* her grinning.

“It was either you or Midoriya,” See Through says cheerfully. “And while I might be invisible it seemed safer to get out of the main target zone. Todoroki was an option too but I don’t want to risk him accidentally freezing me. So, you!”

“I just tagged along,” Sparky admits. “I don’t really have that good control over my quirk and I didn’t want to risk accidentally frying someone from class.”

Katsuki gives them both a flat stare before turning and snatching up a handful of balls, shoving several of them into her pockets.

“So what’s the plan?” Sparky asks as he approached, having found an invitation where there were none, and Katsuki stares as a ball disappears into thin air in front of her.

She throws another one up and it disappears with the other.

“Take out as many of these idiots as possible,” Katsuki grunts, eyeing the air contemplatively. “How many balls can you carry exactly?”

“More than you can!” Something is shoved up against her arm and Katsuki gropes for it blindly, realising after a moment that it was an invisible string bag. “I’ve got to be really careful with where I put it,” See Through explains as Katsuki measures out the size of it. “I have to grow out my hair before they can make a second one. Same with my clothing. But they’ve contacted this guy who can make hair grow so they can make me a whole set!”

See Through’s quirk isn’t made for all out melee battle, Katsuki gets that. It could have been if they’d chosen something that didn’t effectively made her quirk useless by sticking three painfully obvious targets on her, but life didn’t seem interested in playing fair with her.

Katsuki scoops for a handful of balls off the ground before shoving them out blindly and after a second an invisible opening presses against her knuckles and she lets them drop into it.

Sparky approaches them with an armful and Katsuki glances towards the building to the side where she can feel eyes watching them.

-

“I’m going to kill her,” Mina pants as she drags Hitoshi along with her, throwing up a wide wall of acid to melt the balls pelting towards them before he jerked her down one of the rocky roads that that had opened up. “And Todoroki! We had two heavy hitters on our side and they both bailed on us!” she hisses as they sidles along the wall.

“I can’t say I’m surprised,” Hitoshi says as he sucks in a breath and lets it out slowly behind the voice changer. “They’re not exactly team players.”

“But *still*. It’s the principle!”

“Katsuki isn’t too impressed by the whole Hero thing.” They both duck as someone jumps over high above them only to watch the same person rocket back, another student in hot pursuit. “I can only

imagine what she thinks about this entire spectacle.”

“You saw the way she looked earlier, right?” Mina glances at him. “She was really, really angry about something.”

“And she went and deliberately made herself a target,” Hitoshi agrees musingly. “I’m almost sad to miss it, she’s always something of a picture when she’s on a warpath.”

“It’s a bit terrifying.” Mina peers cautiously around the corner. “But I’m worried! People are all up in arms about her on the forums and there’s sure to be more than one person here who has it out for her because she was *kidnapped*!”

She *hates it*. Mina truly and utterly does and it makes her feel helpless because she can’t imagine what it must be like to read any of the stuff they were saying about her if she’d been in Katsuki’s seat.

Hitoshi glances towards her. “You want to go look for her?”

“Yes!” Mina exclaims. “But also *no* because she can take care of herself and we can’t afford running around looking for her with all of this going on!” She puffs out her cheeks. “I’m going to find a rope and tie it around her for the next task,” she mutters viciously.

Hitoshi snorts beside her, mouth opening-

And then he’s *not there* and Mina’s eyes widens as he slams hard against the rock behind her with a pained grunt, the target on his shoulder letting out a *ding!*

“Got you, that’s no good.” The Shiketsu student lands in a smooth crouch as Mina steps back, raising her arm. “Having a small conversation even in the midst of trouble, that’s seems a bit *foolish* I dare say.” She adjusts the cap on her head, a smile on her lips as she straightened out. “In tests where they expect a melee like this one apparently there are those that go after places they already have a lot of intel on.” There’s a gleam in her eyes, fingers raising to touch against her lips. “That’s why I came to see you, since there was a possibility that U.A. would be taken out early.” She winks at them and Mina can’t quite explain the ill-ease that worms through her.

I didn’t even see her. Can she disappear? Like Tooru but with an on-and-off switch?

Hitoshi pats dust off his shoulder as he steps up beside her, fingers

tangling in the capture weapon around his neck and yanking it loose.

“I didn’t want to miss the chance of interacting with such a prestigious school.” The other girl tilts her head. “And I didn’t want to miss the chance to know more about *you*.”

Mina feels a shiver run down her spine because the girl is staring straight at her, gaze strangely intent, almost hungry with an interest that she doesn’t understand.

“You sure talk a lot for someone who hasn’t even bothered to introduce herself,” Mina shoots back, feeling the acid slick against the skin of her arm.

“My name isn’t of importance but I suppose you can call me Camie.” *Camie* rakes her eyes up her frame and Mina tilts her head. “I know plenty enough about *you*, of course, *Mina-chan*.” Beside her Hitoshi shifts and Mina furrows her brow. “It’s quite the interesting quirk you got there. *Acid*.” The girl wraps her arms around herself with a little shiver of delight. “It sounds *beautiful*.”

“Mina,” Hitoshi cautions.

“I know,” Mina mutters back because there’s something really off with the entire situation and she doesn’t trust it.

《Run or attack?》

Mina meets the brown eyes of the other girl and knows from the curl of her grin that they’re not about to be given a choice.

Chapter End Notes

Since I'm a liar you're getting an actual exam chapter because I was too excited about it and now it's 7 am and I'm probs going to be regretting all my life-choices but! We're here! And it only took us 51 chapters and 200k words to reach volume 12 of the manga.

What a glorious morning realization to have.

Not much to say about this one I guess, without threading into spoiler territory, and we do not want that so I'm just gonna haul myself off to bed and tuck myself in for a well-deserved sleep.

Your support and comments are as amazing as always and I am ever so thankful you make this such a fun thing to write and

share with you guys.

I'm artsy-death on tumblr if you want to swing by there and this has been chapter 52 of In The End.

I hope you enjoyed!

The Provisional Hero Exam pt. 2

Chapter Notes

See Through = Hagakure

Sparky = Kaminari

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

“Are you going to watch her?” Hawks hoists himself up on Enji’s desk, perching a bit precariously in that odd bird-like behaviour he’d come to resign himself to. “You got to be curious, right? What if she doesn’t pass? That won’t reflect too well on you.”

“She’ll pass.” Enji pulls some paper away from under Hawks, mouth in a heavy frown as he smoothed the wrinkles out. “She’s stubborn but she’s not a fool.”

Hawks dips his head back, yellow eyes gleaming. “Aww, you *are* having fun training her, aren’t you?”

There are few who will go up against him and not hesitate a second time and he can admire the sheer guts of it. There’s also something to be said for the violence that twists inside of her, burning vividly with her anger.

She hates him but he wants to know *why*. It rankles at him, the way she looks at him.

“Don’t you have better things to do?” He reaches to pull one of the books she’d borrowed and returned to him, slipping it into the drawer of his desk to be considered for another time.

“Your son is there too, isn’t he?” Hawks lifts one wing out of the way as Enji sorts through his papers, piles upon piles, never ending. “The youngest – Shouto, right?”

“Why are you here?” Enji growls. “You’re the Number Two, you should have better things to do.”

“You’d think that,” Hawks agrees. “But all the people want right now is *you*.” Enji’s muscles coils tense. “Can’t say I blame them. I mean, you’re *you* and I’m clearly the downgrade-“

Hawks keeps chattering but Enji looks towards the window

overlooking the city he'd grown up in, eyes dark and brooding.

-

Sparky twists, lightning arching across the ground as Katsuki exploded upwards in a quick step sequence across the air before twisting as See Through's hand tightened where it'd secured itself in a firm grip on her collar, a ball smacking into her palm before Katsuki fired it off, turning, another ball finding her hand as she framed her palms forward, her quirk loud as it fired off.

Katsuki touches down with a sliding skid and a twists to snap the rubber soles of her boots back in place, hands only just touching down against the ground as Sparky hurriedly cut off his quirk as the last person stumbled back before falling, all three targets glowing brightly.

Sparky bends over, hands on his knees as he breathes in, chest rising and falling hard.

"You-" He sucks in a breath. "Are you sure your quirk isn't just attracting weirdos?"

"Is that why you're here?" Katsuki asks smartly, mouth curling up to flash teeth.

Sparky squints at her. "That's scary, you're allowed to stop anytime."

See Through remains quiet, tucking her chin tight against Katsuki's shoulder and fingers tapping against her chest for attention before giving the fabric a little tug to the left.

Katsuki twitches her fingers against her knee in acknowledgement.

"Seriously though!" Sparky straightens up, wiping sweat from his forehead. "We're barely getting anywhere without *someone* bursting out." A strange look flickers across his face. "I didn't think people actually stopped to make speeches in, you know, real life."

"They don't if they're smart," Katsuki snorts. "But people have a lot of opinions they feel the need to share."

A ball slips into her pocket, and then the other.

Sparky stretches his arms up over his head. "Time and space, man." A pause. "Wo-man?"

Katsuki gives him a wry look.

“Man?” Sparky checks. “I don’t want to be, you know, rude or anything-“

“You’re fine,” she snorts, slipping one of the balls out and lobbying it to him with a miniscule jerk in the direction See Through had indicated and disguising it with a roll of her shoulders. “And it’s not just me they’re after, 1-A is likely one of the biggest targets today.”

Sparky’s head tips to the side. “Because...?”

“Because there’s a power vacuum with All Might stepping down and he’s been personally involved in training you,” Katsuki explains absently, straining her ear at the strange noise, low and almost liquid-like somewhere behind her. “People fancy the idea of him choosing a successor and naturally that puts you as targets.”

“But not you?” Sparky, very smartly, does not mention All Might’s clear favouritism of Mini Might – it’s the sort of taboo subject all of class 1-A are aware of but never discuss openly when there’s a chance it can be overheard.

Katsuki knows that only because Mina is an incurable gossip and her phone kept her steadily updated whether she wanted it to or not. More recently it wasn’t just Mina and Shinsou messaging her about whatever the fuck but the odd number and name pinging for attention on her screen.

The girl’s chat in particular was something she scrolled through but unless a topic caught her attention she mostly kept an absent eye on it.

“Anyone who saw the Sports Festival knows that I do not have a good relationship with All Might,” Katsuki says drily. “People’s issue with me is partly because of that, in part because the favouritism shown by Endeavour, and then because of what went down in Kamino.”

“Ah, yeah.” Sparky draws a hand through his messy spikes. “What’s up with that anyway? I’ve been getting some really bad vibes from the Hero forums lately and your name gets thrown around *a lot*.”

“People like having someone to blame and I make a convenient target.” Katsuki shrugs because it’s really quite that simple.

If it hadn’t been her it would have been someone else – it’s just how the world goes. All Might was supposed to be infallible, it was easier to put the blame on his downfall on her, sometimes even easier than

blaming All For One because it didn't give power to the one actually responsible.

At least that's how Katsuki reasons it when she can be bothered to think about it.

"That's stupid." She blinks, angling around to look at him, momentarily distracted. "It's not like you asked to be kidnapped." He rubs at his neck. "I mean, I don't understand fully why they picked you out of all of us but they just needed someone from All Might's class, right?"

Katsuki stares at him until he flushes, pink creeping up his cheek.

"Hey! I can be smart too! You don't need to look so surprised!" He shifts, ball clutched tight in his hand and eyes flashing, his mouth opening as See Through gives her jacket a hard tug and-

Katsuki twists going low, one hand jerking flat downwards with an explosion to keep the extra weight of See Through from toppling them both over as a large hand curled to grasp air above her.

An explosion sends the strange squishy-hand splattering around them with her right as another harder one from her left one jerked them upright, See Through hugging tight to her body with a small breath near her ear as Katsuki found her footing.

Her head turns, finding the one responsible, an ugly frown marring his face as his chin tilted up in challenge and she flashes her own teeth in a fiendish curl of her lips.

"There you are," Katsuki breathes. "Finally coming out to play?" she calls mockingly as she slides one foot back. "I was getting tired of you hiding away like a coward."

"He really wasn't being discreet about it either," See Through whispers close to her ear. "I'm almost offended."

Her mouth stretches wider even as her eyes narrows because-

She still knows shit about his quirk and there are some truly fucked-up ones out there. Large hands meant some sort of immobilization but there's always the risk of it being more than that and she's not about to let it fucking *touch her*.

Shiketsu – it's the second time that day she's meeting one of its

students and she knows a grudge when she sees one.

She categorizes this one as *Pom-Pom* because there's a pompous sort of flair to him.

Katsuki lowers her mouth into her collar. "I'll bet you he's going to make a speech," she says quietly, lips barely moving.

"He's *absolutely* going to make a speech," See Through agrees with a small huff of warm air. "I bet it's going to be all metaphorical and dramatic, he looks the sort." A pause. "He's keeping his distance which means he's a long-range fighter. Either we wait him out and see how his quirk works or we try and take him out before he can. I've been keeping an eye on him and he's not gotten close enough to spot me, I think."

Katsuki hums in acknowledgement, glancing at Sparky who is seizing their opponent up.

"U.A. High... I respected you, you know?" See Through makes an amused little noise that she hides by pressing her mouth against Katsuki's collar. "I actually thought you might be able to measure up to our school." He looks at her, chin raising high and mighty and full of ego. "But your class has done nothing but erode that respect."

"Have we now?" It's Sparky, stepping forward, a challenging grin on his face. "Unlike, Shiketsu, was it?"

"*Shiketsu*," Pom-Pom corrects with a narrowing of his eyes.

"Ah! Sorry, sorry!" Sparky waves his hand. "You know how it is, if you don't make the news it's just *so hard* to keep track of all the Hero schools out there!" He spreads his hands out and Katsuki decides that he's an absolute *little shit*.

"I'm not here for *you*." Pom-Pom raises his chin. "A no-name who didn't even make the top five in the Sports Festival? You might as well be dirt beneath my shoe."

Sparky twitches and his smile becomes strained at the edges as Pom-Pom turns his attention to her and Katsuki would just rather *not*.

"You." His eyes narrows so hard they're practically slits. "*You* I respected the most."

"How nice," Katsuki says flatly. "Feel free to find better role models

any day.”

See Through makes a low strangled noise against her shoulder.

“You grabbed the top spot at the festival.” There’s an uncomfortable amount of *something* in his voice as he drinks in the sight of her. “Your strength has been recognised by both sides. Kidnapped by the Villains and then apprenticed by the new Number One Hero.”

He straightens his back, chest pushing forward, hands behind his back.

“This is to be my demonstration, if you will.”

“He’s planning something,” See Through breathes quietly into her ear. “Can you hear me over the line even if you don’t have the headphones on?” Katsuki taps her fingers twice against her invisible knee. “I’ll go take a look then, try to keep him talking.”

Katsuki reaches up to turn the volume on her headphones up, disguising it with a scratch of fingers against her cheek as See Through carefully slid off her back, touching down without sound, one hand curled against her stomach to hide the targets on her body.

“This test is constructed to find the best of the best because All Might’s retirement marks a turning point, you see.” There’s a feverish sort of belief in Pom-Pom’s voice. “Society isn’t meant to have a constant influx of Heroes!” He takes a step forward. “What all this implies is that the wheat is supposed to be separated from the chaff.”

The fucking what-?

“I surmised that they’ve started screening for the noble calling of *Hero* more rigorously now. I fully supports those efforts and will contribute by removing *you* people from the equation.”

“Hey now, being a Hero is cool and all but *noble calling?*” Sparky rubs at his neck. “I don’t know, man.”

“So you’re here because you think beating us will make some sort of grand statement of your own self-importance. Got it. Wonderful.” Katsuki rolls her shoulders. “I can’t say I disagree with what you’re saying but gotta agree with Sparky here-“

“It’s *Kaminari*-“

“Noble calling?” She wrinkles her nose, ignoring him. “And you’re,

what, the *chosen one*?" Katsuki drags her eyes up his body with a snort. "Sure, Pom-Pom."

"My name is Shishikura Seiji." He raises his chin.

"Yeah, never heard of you," Katsuki says, bored. "And Pom-Pom suits you better."

"He's spreading these weird lumpy balls behind you," See Through's voice comes tinnily from her headphones. *"I think they're made from his flesh?? His arms are all gone, that's why he's keeping them behind his back."*

"I will show you." Pom-Pom folds forward. "You might not be in school anymore but I will show you the dignity and—"

"Behind you! Left—"

Katsuki twists, the explosion rocking from her nitroglycerine drenched hand loud and volatile as Sparky dove away, gunky flesh splattering across the street as she dragged her headphones over her ears with her free hand.

"It's gathering together again," See Through reports as Katsuki taps the button to link up her mic. *"His control is good – really good. There's at least fifteen different – lumps? He's spread them out around the two of you."*

"Sparky!"

"It's *Kaminari*! Ka-mi-na—" Electricity sparkles from his hands, one foot sliding back, "—ri!"

Katsuki kicks her heel back and the soles of her shoes slides out as she shoots off the ground, rocking high as Sparky arched his arm out, lightning zipping across the concrete in a wild uncontrolled arch as Pom-Pom leapt up, a fleshy hand of his quirk catching and carrying him high off the ground.

Katsuki steps through the air, explosions carrying her fast and controlled as she folded out of the way of lumps shooting towards her.

"Right!"

She twists one hand behind her back and curls into a roll mid-air before yanking her hand out and sending off another rocking

explosion that shot her straight up over a cloud of dark smoke and above Pom-Pom whose head snaps up towards her.

“Get him to turn left-“

Katsuki explodes two more lumpy balls of flesh that rocks towards her, side-stepping to the left as she grabbed a ball from her pocket and twisted through the air, arm drawing back before she snapped it down towards him.

He ducks but there’s a cheerful *ding!* as another collided with one of the targets on his chest between two of the fingers and Katsuki drops down hard to land on a crouch on the wall as Pom-Pom slowly presses his hand against the glowing target.

“That’s right you bastard!” Sparky calls from down on the ground on her left as he made a show of throwing one ball up and down in his palm. “Don’t underestimate us!”

Pom-Pom’s eyes slowly narrows until they’re nearly slits.

-

“Is it really smart to send wackjob out on her own?” Dabi drawls, leaning his head back against the couch and craning to look at Shigaraki as he shuffled into the room. “She’s going to be surrounded with Heroes and she won’t be able to resist a good temptation.”

“Forget about that!” Twice twitches around. **“What if she passes?”**

Shigaraki pauses, turning slowly to look at him, dead hand plastered to his face and hiding most of his expression.

“Maybe she’ll abandon us for Touya-san!” Twice flails as Dabi’s fingers twitches. **“That traitorous little-“**

“Toga knows what she’s doing.” Shigaraki reaches up to scratch at his neck, pulling at already dead and flaking skin. “Don’t underestimate her.”

-

Hitoshi slams into the ground, blood leaving his mouth, eyes wide in shock as his arms folded over his ribs, coughing desperately and wetly as he curled on himself.

“Too slow!” Camie sing-songs.

"Hitoshi!" Mina gasps, twisting around, acid already flaring in a wide arc, but Camie is once again gone and she's left panting, acid sizzling against the ground as she turned desperately towards him.

It's no use, she's too fast! Damn it, think-

She sees purple eyes widen, his mouth open, but her foot has barely touched down against the ground before she found herself with a knee slamming into her gut, stealing the air from her lungs before an elbow knocked against her cheek, snapping her head to the side.

She stumbles back blindly, wheezing for a desperate breath, but Camie's fingers sinks into her hair and yanks her head hard backwards while sweeping her legs out from beneath her and-

Mina's back hits the ground hard, teeth knocking together, and Camie drops down on top of her, knees pressing against her wrists to pin them flat as Mina struggles to breathe, the small gasps coming sharp and painful.

She coughs and regrets it with a small noise of pain and brown eyes considers her with a curious little gleam.

"You're thinking I have a vanishing quirk." Camie tilts her head and there's something about the look in those eyes that makes Mina wary as she gasps while staring up at her, heart pounding hard inside her chest. "You're thinking wrong." The other girl's mouth stretches out. "You're just too *slow*."

"You're-" She coughs, her mouth tasting of iron, grimacing as eyes sharpened upon her. "What do you even *want*?"

Because the targets on her body are still untouched, all three of them, and the ball lies forgotten on the ground somewhere around them, giving up all pretence of being part of the test.

"I told you already, silly." Camie leans down, so close that Mina can feel her warmth as she inhales. "I want to know all there is to know about you," she hums and Mina shivers at the hunger in her voice.

"But why *me*?" Mina demands. "I've never even seen you before!"

"But I've seen *you*." Camie draws back to peer down at her. "You know, I think I understand why she's so fond of you."

"Who-"

“Don’t be dumb.” Camie strokes a finger down her cheek, dipping into the tear there with a small exhale as her nail scraped to draw more blood from it. “She’s lovely, isn’t she? Especially when she’s *angry*. But-“ Camie bends down and Mina cringes as her tongue presses against the wound, dragging up with a soft noise. “Not as lovely as you are. The red really is beautiful against the pink of your skin,” she breathes.

“What do you want with Katsuki?” Mina demands, muscles drawing taut, but Camie holds her with an ease that allows for little more than a small jerk as the other girl blows soft of the cooling trail of saliva with a little giggle.

“What does anyone want with Katsuki?” Camie murmurs against her ear. “So angry, so hurt, lashing out at the world she doesn’t fit into.” A soft breath. “She breaks so beautifully, *ne?*” There’s something almost dreamy in her voice, pink creeping across her cheeks. “It looks like we both want to learn more about each other.” Camie presses so close that Mina feels her breasts flatten against her chest. “So now your turn... Why’re you hoping to become a Hero?” she asks, eyes gleaming. “Honor? Pride? *For someone else’s sake?*” Camie breathes in, the air thick with hunger. “I want to know all about you, *Mina-chan*.”

Chapter End Notes

I feel like Hagakure's quirk is criminally underused in canon and she's such a wonderful character - having tons of fun exploring the potential use of having an invisible partner. And Kaminari is a curious dude as well, I have some thoughts.

Himiko met Katsuki much earlier than canon which means that her interest was already focused and she never grasped onto Midoriya. But Mina? Someone who is close to her *Kasu-chan*? Yeah, she's gonna be curious and I've been waiting to finally get the two of them together, even if Mina isn't aware of who she is or just what her relationship with Katsuki is, and Himiko is a dangerous person to underestimate.

Some POV shifts, it's gonna be needed to get a broader understanding of some stuff going on and I'm anticipating one in particular.

Ah. So many fun things waiting for us in the future.

It's getting late so I'm kicking myself into bed on that note. You're all wonderful and I adore you guys, stay safe and happy easter for all those who celebrate it (IRL or on AC).

I'm artsy-death on tumblr if you're around there and this has been chapter 53 of In The End.

I hope you enjoyed!

The Provisional Hero Exam pt. 3

Chapter Notes

See Through = Hagakure

Shitty Hair = Kirishima

Sparky = Kaminari

Round Cheeks = Uraraka

Mini Might = Midoriya

Pom-Pom = Shishikura Seiji

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

“You think yourself so clever.” Pom-Pom’s mouth curls as his body bends backwards, head turning to look over his shoulder. “But don’t mistake me for a fool!”

“See Through!” Katsuki snaps, twisting around, but a giant hand is already rocking through the air, too fast for the girl to avoid.

“*Touya*—” See Through’s voice reaches her through her headphones in a shocked gasp, Katsuki’s hand shooting up to press it closer, trying to find any sort of understanding of what was happening, but it the sound cuts off completely after a strange squishy noise.

Katsuki stares at the empty air as the large hand opened up to reveal nothing, her chest rising and falling as there’s a *splat* against the ground.

What in the absolute—

“Hagakure!” Sparky is already bolting towards her and Katsuki only just manages to lurch forward to grasp the sleeve of his jacket, jerking him sharply back and nearly sending him sprawling over her as he collided roughly with her.

“Don’t be an idiot!” she hisses, shoving him back as he turned on her with furious eyes. “You go running in there without a plan and he’ll do the same fucking thing to you.”

“I know but—” He shoves his head closer, keeping his voice low. “It’s one thing if it’s you or me but if we lose sight of her I don’t know how we’re going to find her.” He waves a hand. “We can’t afford to wait!”

Pom-Pom steps slowly over the concrete ground and Katsuki bares her teeth as he pauses, one boot rising decisively before pressing down on, by all appearance, thin air.

There's no protest, no sound, no *nothing*.

"What an interesting quirk," he comments, his mouth curling up as he levelled more weight down on what could only be See Through.

"Clever, but not clever enough."

"Why isn't she moving?" Sparky breathes, anxiousness creeping into his voice. "Damn it, *Touya!*"

"I know." She narrows her eyes as she flexes her fingers. "If she can't move she can't fucking defend herself." She breathes out through clenched teeth.

She knows that without See Through to watch her back she was at a disadvantage because those lumps kept appearing fucking *everywhere*. She's fast but she doesn't have eyes at the back of her neck and her explosions are limited to her hands and feet which made her back one big fucking *target*.

Sparky is watching See Through, careful and tense as he waits for her to work something out and Katsuki isn't supposed to be fucking *responsible* but hell if she's just gonna leave See Through to *this*.

She bends down and tugs roughly on the snaps of her boots, kicking them off and yanking up the hems of her pants before shrugging out of her coat.

She throws it at Sparky. "Wrap her in that."

"You got a plan?" he demands, glancing hopefully towards her.

"No." Katsuki stretches out her arms above her head, and then behind her back, getting a careful feel for her reach. "But we won't need one."

Katsuki takes a step forward, Pom-Pom's head snapping towards her, and she keeps his gaze as she smears nitroglycerin down her arms and over her shoulders and down her back, mindful not to get too close to her spine, the sickening sweet scent cloying in its intensity as she bent her knees, inhaling, centering herself carefully.

"Whoa, hey – hey Touya, that doesn't look very sa-"

-

"What is it about you," Camie murmurs as she strokes her fingers over Mina's brow, "that draws her I wonder? A Hero-to-be, young and idealistic, naïve of the ways of the world. I bet you were *proud* when they told you that your teacher would be All Might himself. I bet you *loved it*."

-

Katsuki has been going up against Endeavour enough times to know the limits of her quirk and before that was Dabi.

She knows how much heat her skin can take and she sends a spark up her arm with a clenching of her teeth as the fleshy hand trying to wrap around her exploded into bits, heat flaring all over her back as she took out another two lumps, skidding and twisting on the ground before exploding her feet and slamming into him, sending them both rolling.

She's stronger and he doesn't stand a chance as she slams him into the ground beneath her, her fingers closing around his throat, slick with nitroglycerin.

"One fucking move and I'll blow your fucking head off," she hisses at him as he coughs, his breath strained as she clenched down, hard enough to bruise as she leant over him.

There's smoke curling from her ruined shirt, blisters running down her arm, shoulder and back but Katsuki barely notices as he stares up at her with an expression she cares fuck all about.

Sparky's approaches them both with an invisible lump wrapped carefully in her jacket and-

How the fuck is that See Through? Katsuki can't fucking see her but the dip in the jacket is too small to belong to a human.

She clenches down harder before loosening up as he jerked beneath her, the lumps of his handless arms jerking up as if to grasp at her.

"You're *insane*," he strains out beneath her. "No wonder-" He chokes as she presses down warningly with a curl of her lip because she's not fucking interested in hearing another bloody word from him.

"Whatever he did she can't say anything," Sparky furrows his brow. "I

think she can see because I nearly poked her in the eye, maybe, but-“
He shrugs.

“Turn. Her. Back,” Katsuki growls.

“Okay! Okay just-“ She nearly tightens her hold again as he twists but there’s a surprised exclamation from Sparky as the lump in his arm grew heavier, his back bending before he caught himself and drew See Through tighter against him as she gasped, coughing, the sound reaching her body from in front of her and through her headphones.

“Oh-“ A cough and a desperately sucked breath. “I’m never doing that again, that’s for sure!” See Through’s voice is off, strained with something Katsuki recognises and doesn’t like.

“You okay?” Sparky frets as he carefully places her back on her feet after a bit of awkward juggling of invisible limbs, one hand remaining on what Katsuki can only guess is See Through’s arm or shoulder.

“Yes-“ A breath. “Yes, I’m fine. I think I lost my bag though.” False levity. “But Touya-“

There are some truly loathsome quirks out there, Katsuki knows, hers is only one among them and whatever the fuck he’d done to See Through she’s not about to let him do it again.

She looks down at him, at the purple hair and eyes that shift from anger to something else the longer she keeps his gaze.

She hears the buzz from Sparky and See Through who are talking and it filters oddly as she breathes through clenched teeth, her jaw working before she forced herself to loosen her hold.

Katsuki shoves her hand roughly into her pocket and grabs for one of the balls there before pressing it down on both of his last remaining targets.

“Noble cause my fucking ass,” she snorts as she pulled herself roughly off him before she did something stupid – like blow his fucking face off.

The urge itches and curls inside of her but he’s a fucking *kid* and Katsuki’s moral compass is shitty but not *that* shitty.

She’s not a murderer and she doesn’t want to be one.

Sparky lets out a low whistle as she turns towards them, eyes widening. “Shit, your chest-“

“It’s fucking nothing.” She grabs her jacket, dragging off the last of her ruined t-shirt and shoving herself back into it, ignoring the way it dragged against the blisters. “See Through-“

“I really am fine!” she insists. “I don’t really understand it but it made me into this small lump but it didn’t – it didn’t hurt or anything. Could have done without the whole boot on top of me thought.”

Katsuki’s mouth curls.

“You’ll regret this!” Pom-Pom shouts behind them as he drags himself up, arms slowly reforming in his lap, legs stretched out before him. “This proves nothing!”

Katsuki flips him off before bending down and there’s a breath before See Through’s hand finds her good shoulder.

“You sure?” she asks in a lowering of her voice and there’s a tremble to the limb that Katsuki hates.

“I can take her,” Sparky offers but it’s a bad combination with his quirk and they all know it.

“Just get up,” Katsuki says shortly, her hand finding and invisible leg and hoisting her up properly as See Through pressed off the ground, one arm looping carefully around her neck and grasping at the front of her jacket.

“My bag, is it-?”

“We can try looking for it?” Sparky offers, one hand pressing against the back of his neck as he turned around to look around the large stretch of the bridge. “But I’m not sure we’d find it.”

“It’s – it’s fine,” See Through breathes out.

It’s *not* fucking *fine*.

Katsuki doesn’t pretend to understand what it’s like to live life invisible but to be robbed of voice and the ability to move when no one can fucking *see you* is a prospect that knots ugly and horrible inside her chest.

The bag might be lost but it could just as easily have been See

Through.

She regrets not slamming her knee between his fucking legs.

Bastard would have deserved it.

-

“Has it been everything you imagined?” Camie wonders, leaning down. “I bet it hasn’t. Katsuki has a way of drawing out the best and worst of those around her.” Her mouth stretches out. “It’s not her fault, of course, so tell me-“

-

“I thought I’d gotten stronger,” See Through tells her as Katsuki crouches like a gargoyle on top of a slab of concrete that one of their opponents had bodily hauled up from the ground. “But it’s like – no matter how strong I get my quirk will never let me be faster or stronger than a quirkless person. Not like you.”

Katsuki’s mouth thins but she doesn’t bother looking over her shoulder because as always there’s nothing to see and she’s not sure how the other girl can fucking *stand it*.

To have people always looking through you, never meeting your gaze.

If she’s killed in battle would anyone even fucking *notice*? Would they even be able to find her damn *body*?

Katsuki thinks of Amélie’s body in a rain drenched street and the knowledge that at least her parents wouldn’t be left wondering *what* had happened to her, only *why* it had happened.

See Through-

“You fucking have,” Katsuki breathes out quietly. “It sucks but there will always be those stronger in the world and all we can do is do our best to fucking survive in it.” She snorts. “I was killed by a normal fucking guy with a knife, shit happens, sometimes when we least suspect it. But it doesn’t make us weak, it just makes us human.”

Katsuki resents her weakness, she hates it with a violence that burns and froths inside her skin, a desperation to never be in that position again.

But they’re *her* issues. She recognises as much, somehow.

"I'm not going to tell you how to live your damn life, Hagakure." There's a sharp exhale and Katsuki ignores it. "Point is, this test isn't geared towards you, great, not damn much you can do about that. But you followed me to team up and you fucking *compensated* for it. 1-A is-" She breathes in. "They're fucking idealistic as shit but none of them are the sort of just fuck off and leave you behind."

Not even I, apparently, Katsuki thinks but does not say as she watches Sparky below.

She's not sure what the fuck the things he's throwing around are but if he'd found a way to not fry absolutely everyone in his path it was about *damn time*.

Another quirk she's damn happy not to have. She might sweat nitroglycerin but at least she'd found a way to shut her sweat glands off and there's a capacity of control in it that she's slowly coming to terms with.

It will always be volatile and unstable, there will always be the chance that she slips up, but she wouldn't even know where to begin with trying to control fucking *lightning*.

Even Mina's made more sense – rise and lower pH levels, limit and intensify the damage done.

"That's the second time you've called me by my name."

"What?"

"You did it before - during the rescue."

Katsuki absolutely does not remember doing such a thing but her memory had also been shot to hell after AFO fucked her up.

"I like it," Hagakure admits with a hum. "Hey, Touya? I know you aren't at U.A. anymore but do you think... do you think we could train together again sometime?"

Katsuki blinks, looking away from Sparky to glance over her shoulder and stare at the clouds.

"Like, what – you want to come out to Endeavour's place?" she asks, bemused, because it's one thing to catch and hour or two after school and another thing entirely to make a whole fucking trip out of it.

"You think he'd be okay with it? Would you?" Hagakure hesitates but- "I know you're going to be busy and I will too – it's not long until we have another internship as well but-" A pause. "We're already training together, us girls, and I feel like I'm falling behind, you know?"

"What about Ponytail?" Katsuki asks with a furrow of her brow. "Neither of you have physical quirks. That should put you fairly evenly."

"Yes, but." Katsuki feels Hagakure duck closer. "Can you keep a secret?"

"Your business is your fucking business," Katsuki says flatly.

"Have you ever noticed how easy it is to be jealous of her?" It's a rushed confession, the words are not particularly strange, and Katsuki has been sixteen once before. "She's- she's everything I'm not, you know? Beautiful, clever, they say she's a genius, even. It's not-" There's a small frustrated noise near her ear. "I know it isn't Yaomomo's fault, the way people look at her, and don't look at me, but it's still... it hurts."

There is good attention and there is bad attention and Katsuki doubts Ponytail would express any sort of appreciation for a lot of the whispers and looks that followed her.

She's a pretty girl, Katsuki isn't blind, and she's been in the same locker room as teenage boys. They'd toned it down after the runt was kicked out, without someone to actively encourage it, but she's not deaf anymore and she hears a lot of shit she'd just rather *not*.

But unlike Ponytail Hagakure has to actively go out of her way to draw attention with wide gestures and relies on her voice in conversations where there's no facial expression.

That she struggles with the way attention gets drawn to others and not herself is fucking *normal*. Especially as a teenager with hormones, changes, jacked-up self-awareness and all fucking insecurities that came with it.

Throw feelings into the mix and it got fucking *messy*.

(And Katsuki really needs to tell Mina to dial back on some of the gossip, she's entirely too up-to-date on the 1-A romance drama, it's ridiculous).

Katsuki connection to Dabi had grounded itself in an understanding that's easy and complicated alike and that had grown into something more.

She *likes* looking at Dabi. She likes the colour of his eyes, the way his flames flicker and climb up his skin, the curl of his lips, the way scars stretch gnarly and dark against his skin and the messiness of his hair.

Would she have been drawn to him the same way if she couldn't fucking *see him*?

Yes.

She doesn't even have to think about it. Even now her appreciation of Dabi is entirely grounded in the fact that it's *him*.

But people are superficial and narrowminded– Hagakure would have to come to terms with it one way or the other (Katsuki is too, she just has a biased spot a mile wide when it comes to Dabi, and when it comes to some of the physical quirks she's seen invisibility at least wasn't about to leave a puddle of slime in someone's bed, it's just fucked-up in other ways).

Shit, Katsuki had been *deaf*, she knows how much it sucks to be overlooked. People got fucking *uncomfortable* when they'd realised she couldn't hear them.

Few had bothered to try and meet her half-way, even as she reached her teens and got better at reading lips, technology evolving to replace the odd papers and pens she'd kept stuffed in her pocket.

She blows out a breath and she feels Hagakure tense on her back.

“It's not Ponytail's fault that she draws the sort of attention she does and while I *understand* where you're coming from I don't agree with it. But feelings are fucking *complicated* and I get that. I'm not about to lecture you on it,” Katsuki says shortly. “If you think I can help, somehow, that's – fine. I don't mind it.”

Fuck if Katsuki knows that Hagakure is looking to find with her but fighting an invisible opponent had the potential for a challenge, especially if she'd been keeping up her training since Katsuki last went up against her.

“You mean it?” Hagakure perks up.

“Yeah,” Katsuki grunts, wondering if she’d end up regretting it but-

“I won’t let you down, I promise!” Hagakure sounds genuinely fucking *relieved* and it warms the tips of her ears because it’s such an odd thing to be happy about but also-

Let me down? Katsuki shrugs her shoulders and Hagakure takes the hint, shifting to grab hold properly as Katsuki took a step off the wall to land in a hard crouch on the ground as Sparky turned around, sweaty and accomplished even as he poked an accusing finger to them both.

What would she even have to let me down about?

Katsuki tunes him out, bending down to snatch up a ball and throw it back to Hagakure.

-

“- what’s it like knowing that you will one day be working with the Heroes who let a man beat your best friend bloody without repercussion?” Camie breathes. “What was it like, seeing her body in the aftermath? Covered in blood and bruises, struggling to *breathe*.”

Camie leans closer, lips pressing soft against her ear.

“Does it make you *angry*?”

-

There’s a mess hall after the first task and Katsuki tilts her shoulder down, Hagakure snagging two bottles of water and two of the lunch boxes as they pass by the table, her eyes gliding over the gathering of students before finding on 1-A in one of the corners.

“Man, I’m *starving*,” Sparky exclaims as he grabs two bentos for himself and two bottles of juice, completely ignoring the way several people had turned to focus on them. “But we made it!” Two of the targets on his chest is glowing, and one of Katsuki’s where she’d been caught off-guard, but Hagakure still have all three of hers untouched.

There are still students from the class missing but the arena had been fairly big and it had taken them nearly thirty minutes to get back after the bell had rung to signify the end of the first task.

“Hey! Kaminari! Touya!” Shitty Hair waves at them.

“Oh hey! And Sero! It’s great to see you! How did it go, man?” Sparky is quickly dragged in with his friends, one or two of them looking a bit singed and rough around the edges but grinning.

“And don’t forget about me, Kirishima!” Hagakure pipes up from Katsuki’s shoulder, waving one of the water bottles.

“Oh! Hagakure! That means we’re only missing four of us!” Shitty Hair grins sharp and shark-like with his teeth. “Ashido and Shinsou aren’t back yet,” he says when he notices Katsuki’s frown. “Midoriya and Uraraka are also late.”

Hagakure slides off Katsuki’s back, pressing bottles and bentos into her arms

“I’m just gonna find Aizawa-sensei real quick, he has my extra pair of gloves!”

Katsuki doesn’t have time to answer because between one blink and the next Hagakure is gone and she huffs, turning to look at Shitty Hair who is staring back at her.

“Got through it alright then?” he asks her, folding his arms over a broad, mostly bare, chest. “Center of the plaza turned into a free for all, seems our class is a popular target.”

“Yeah,” Katsuki grunts, dragging a hand through her hair and sliding her headphones off and down around her neck with an absent tug. “I noticed.”

“Aizawa-sensei was here earlier but he said he’d be back, apparently we get an hour break before the next thing kicks off.” Shitty Hair peers towards the entrance of the large room. “I’ll keep an eye out for them, alright?”

Katsuki opens her mouth and then closes it with a slow breath. “Alright,” she agrees.

-

Hagakure had grabbed them both the vegetarian option and Katsuki is half-way through some sort of tofu roll when a familiar voice reaches her and she glances up to see Mini Might, Round Cheeks, Shinsou and Mina approaching.

She shoves the last into her mouth and hauls herself up, Shitty Hair

already waving them over as she steps up beside him.

Mina and Shinsou both zeroes on her and she pauses.

“Kaa-Touya-“ She blinks, turning to Mini Might who has a strange look on his face. “You passed then...” He looks like he doesn’t quite know what to do with himself, shifting from one foot to the other before swallowing. “I’m-“ But the words die on his lips, a tongue darting up to lick against them. “I’d like to talk to you. Later. If that’s okay?”

“That’s... fine, I guess?” Katsuki offers, bemused. “You can grab my number from any of the girls.”

“That’s – yes. I’ll do that.” An anxious look to the side and then back. “Congratulations. On passing.” He offers her a half-smile before stepping past her and Round Cheeks followers with a shrug and a look to her friend as Class Rep enthusiastically waved them down.

Katsuki focuses back on Mina as she draped an arm around her neck and gave her a tug down, eyes burning intently into hers and-

There’s something there in the depth of her golden gaze that captures and holds her, searching, but for what Katsuki doesn’t know.

There’s a dark bruise on her cheek, contrasting odd on her pink skin, a large gash tracing from beneath her eye and down, so deep that she wouldn’t be surprised to see it scar.

“You have some really weird friends,” Mina tells her, the tone of her voice strange, her lips quirking into a smile that doesn’t sit right with her. *Something is wrong*, Katsuki thinks but she doesn’t know what it is and it makes ill-ease curl inside of her. “A heads-up would have been nice. I had no idea you had friends in Shiketsu.”

Katsuki most decidedly *do not* have any *friends* in *Shiketsu* and she gives Mina a blank look.

“Brown hair, brown eyes – does the name Camie ring any bells?” Shinsou looks rough, one arm cradled a bit awkwardly against his chest, and by all appearance he’d been thrown one too many times against the ground. “She was pretty insistent she knew you.”

She opens her mouth but-

“Kasu-chan!”

She stills because there's only one person who calls her by that name and she's never heard it from the voice it comes with, even in the intonation and shape of it is all Himiko, and-

Arms folds around her and she inhales in surprise, catching the familiar flowery scent even as her senses blares in warning because it's all *wrong*. The arms too slim and the body too long, the chest that presses against her back too large and yet-

It's unmistakable Himiko in the way an unfamiliar cheek presses up against her own as she draws her tighter, practically enfolding her as Katsuki struggles against panic and the urge to relax and melt back because it's *Himiko* and yet-

She turns her head, heart pounding in her chest, and the lips are too full, the nose too sharp, but she'd know that look in unfamiliar brown eyes anywhere.

"Surprise!" Himiko-but-not-Himiko giggles. "*Missed me?*"

Chapter End Notes

(Because this story follows Katsuki but that doesn't stop other characters from growing around her, it's the way the world goes).

Regarding Hagakure: it's normal to measure ourselves against those around us and Yaoyorozu represents a lot of things that Hagakure isn't. In contrast to Yaoyorozu there's Katsuki - in many ways they're each other's opposite. On top of that Katsuki is older while her physical age keeps her as someone who doesn't look it and it complicates and simplifies things alike in how she relates to those around her.

I think it makes sense that, out of everyone in 1-A, Hagakure would be more inclined to turn to her than anyone.

The Midoriya situation still remains to clear out. Mina is getting into the depth of things because-

Actions, consequences, everything ripples.

Your love and support is wonderful, sending you all the warmth and love from a very soft writer.

I'm artsy-death on tumblr if you're around there and this has been chapter 54 of In The End.

I hope you enjoyed!

The Provisional Hero Exam pt. 4

Chapter Notes

Round Cheeks = Uraraka

Shitty Hair = Kirishima

Mini Might/Deku = Midoriya

Pom-Pom = Shishikura Seiji

Fluffy = Mora Nagamasa

Loudmouth = Yoarashi Inasa

《Hey》 = sign-language

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Katsuki is aware of the way 1-A is watching them both and she knows it says too much in the way she doesn't jerk out of Himiko's hold, doesn't protest the way the other girl had settled her chin on her shoulder, eyes regarding her patiently as Katsuki struggled to sort out the buzz of her brain into something resembling rationality.

Quirk, it has to be, it's the only fucking thing that makes *sense* but it's one thing to *know* that she's looking at Himiko and another to get it to fucking *fit it into her brain* because-

She's used to blonde hair, sharp teeth, yellow eyes and loose shirts, a button nose and thin lips. It's what her brain has learnt to translate into a touch that doesn't make her want to claw her skin off and she feels like she's been hit by a fucking *train*.

How? In what fucking *world* did it make sense for someone to shift their entire fucking *body into the exact copy of another*? How did genetics work to make such a thing? She doesn't understand it, just like she doesn't understand so fucking *much* in this world.

"What are you doing here?" Katsuki gets out, aware of the eyes on them, the entire fucking *situation* because there are Heroes fucking *everywhere*.

"The same as you, I imagine!" Himiko straightens up from her "I've been looking forward to seeing you again. It's been, what, two, three years?"

What-?

Himiko shifts to drape an arm around her shoulders, facing 1-A who has more than one strange look on their faces and Katsuki would just rather the second phase kicked-off any second now.

“You must be her new class, or old, I guess.” It’s Himiko, but the tone tilts off into something not quite right, almost teasing but not the Himiko kind of teasing and-

Katsuki feels a headache creeping on and she glances at Himiko, trying to understand the angle at play because *fuck*.

A warning would have been nice.

Fucking *something*.

“We used to be in the same class!” It’s not entirely beyond chance that whoever Himiko had taken the body of had been, Katsuki had gone through too many schools to count, faces blurring together, nothing sticking out.

The only reason only one expulsion had made the record is because she made a point of riling others up, never the one to throw the first punch, always so fucking *careful*.

What had Shinsou called her – Camie?

Katsuki grasps at it but it’s-

It’s *Himiko*.

“We used to be pretty close.” Himiko gives her hair a playful little tug by her ear. “One might even call us the *best of friends*. I’ve been pretty worried about her but it seems like she’s found herself in some capable hands!”

“Who are you?” It’s Shouto and Katsuki gives herself a small shake, focusing on him, noting the dip in his brow and downward tilt of his mouth, his gaze sharp on hers for a moment before looking to Himiko.

“Ah! How rude of me.” Himiko slides her arm off Katsuki’s shoulder, pressing her hands together, fingers splayed as she bowed down. “Utsushimi Camie! But you can just call me Camie-chan, anyone who is a friend of Katsuki-chan here is a friend of mine.” She straightens up and Katsuki knows that for all her innocence Himiko’s clever in a way that is dangerous to underestimate. “You must be Todoroki-kun, I was really impressed by you in the Sports Festival. It’s really too bad that

the last match couldn't be held properly! I was really looking forward to it."

"Ah." Shouto blinks. "Thank you."

"Maybe I'll have a chance to go up against you today, ne?" She puts a finger to the corner of her mouth and leans forward in a way that's inviting gazes in a way that Himiko would normally never do.

Katsuki looks to Mina and then flicks her gaze down, noticing then tense curls of her hands, the strain of her smile, the strange look in her eyes as she looks between them and something twists inside of her, unsure and gnawing where it settles heavily.

"I've never met any of Touya's old friends!" Shitty Hair scratches at the back of his neck with a look in his eyes when he glances to her that makes her give him a flat one back, his smile a bit sheepish, and she can almost taste the *I didn't think she had any*.

Which is fucking *true* and she's not about to deny it, and she cares shit about if people find it pathetic, she hadn't wanted any.

She hadn't thought of Himiko as a friend when Dabi dragged her around but perhaps that's what they are – for all that she knows fuck all what to do with it.

Best friend, that's how she thinks of Mina but it's all just words to feelings that she struggles with.

Himiko is just... Himiko. *Hers* in a way that is certain and addicting, both of them greedy in their taking and wanting.

A complete and utter acceptance of the fucked-up parts about her and Katsuki offering her the same in turn as she allows her blood to be swallowed mouthful after mouthful under the hooded gaze of yellow eyes.

-

Katsuki wants to talk to Mina but she doesn't know how to go about it when the room is crowded and the other is resolutely sticking close to Shinsou's side.

He gives her a small shake of his head and a 《later》 when she takes a step towards them.

So instead she's at the edge of 1-A, absolutely not sulking, keeping half-an-ear on Himiko charming her way into 1-A with fake stories (some ringing a bit too true but fuck, if it helps Himiko establish herself as Camie then Katsuki really can't really find it in herself to care).

All Hero schools have Pro-Heroes in the curriculum and there are more than one spread about in connection to the different schools.

Ms Joke is also there and Katsuki is so very thankful she's at the opposite side of the room.

Other Heroes roam about too, a few she half-remembers the names of, their quirks standing out the most in her mind.

She catches Present Mic's eye where he stands next to the teacher of 1-B and he gives her a broad enthusiastic wave that makes her cheeks darken before she ducks them down behind the very handy collar of her jacket and-

Really, say whatever about Endeavour but apparently had some sense for style and she likes the collar, she really fucking does.

《Congrats on passing》 he signs to her and her eyes dips automatically to his hands and the easy familiar gestures of ASL with the first motion. 《Aizawa-》 And she still has no idea why A and *cat* makes up Aizawa's deaf name as Present Mic's fingers pull where whiskers would have been, 《-got caught-up with the higher-ups but should be over soon. You doing OK?》

Katsuki glances towards Himiko and what the fuck is she supposed to say? *Yeah, sorry, there's a Villain schmoozing up the class and that might be a point of mild concern.*

But Katsuki isn't about to sell out Himiko, it's as easy as that. She's going to have a fucking *talk* with Himiko because what the hell was she supposed to do with this Camie once she returned and very obviously *didn't know her*?

Shit, she sincerely hopes no-one is expecting her anywhere near Shiketsu anytime soon because how the *hell* is she supposed to spin that story?

There's a headache throbbing and she wants to be mad but for some fucking reason she grasps at exasperation at most because a part of her-

A part of her *likes this*. Himiko is fucking *here* and Katsuki wants that. She wants everything to stop feeling so damn *split* in her life, to rid of the feeling like she's constantly being jerked in two different directions because-

She's tired. It's exhausting to balance and she doesn't know what she's doing half of the time but-

Himiko is here. And Mina. It's a fucking *disaster in the making* but she can't hate it. She *can't*.

《Old friend,》 she signs to him, which is kinda true. 《We went to the same school,》 is a lie though. Probably.

Where had Himiko even gone to school? Katsuki honestly doesn't know. Their relationship had never been about prying past secrets and she really doesn't care. Himiko is Himiko and that is – enough.

《Just shout if you need me!》

《OK.》

He gives her a thumbs-up, arm stretched out and grin flashing, before turning back to 1-B and Katsuki drags a hand through her hair, wondering if she should feel guilty about lying.

“She attacked Mina-chan and Shinsou-san.” Round Cheeks’ voice gives her a start and she turns to look at her, wondering when the fuck she had snuck up and mildly concerned that she'd been *able to*. “Deku and I found them, she roughed them up pretty badly.” There's a small dip in her brow as she looks at Himiko, as if trying to puzzle something out.

Himiko went after Mina? And Shinsou?

Katsuki looks over to Mina but – she knows that Himiko is capable of, just how far she was willing to push all edges, living free to her own rules of life (as in having a sincere lack of them), and a bit of bruising and a tiny bit of blood is honestly fucking *mild*.

A bit belatedly Katsuki remembers that it's very likely that some out of 1-A had met Himiko as *Himiko* as she glances at Round Cheeks.

That is... not good.

Really, sometimes Katsuki really wonders about the League because

what was the *point* of all of *this*? Why had Himiko decided to turn up in disguise *now*? If she was after her she could just have taken the chance during their last meeting so that wasn't it, All Might wouldn't be making an appearance, and Endeavour had already fucked off so *why*.

For all that Katsuki knows it could just be a self-indulgent whim of Himiko's but she sincerely doubts that Himiko would risk placing herself among so many Heroes if there wasn't a *point* to it. She's not stupid.

Fuck it, Katsuki is suspicious but also – if it doesn't involve her does she really *care*? Himiko clearly had the means to get in and out on her own (and Katsuki is still struggling to wrap her mind around *that*) and she'd done little more than rough up Mina, Shinsou somewhat more, and-

She better have a good fucking reason for all of this, Katsuki thinks, dragging a hand through her hair.

"Excuse me, Touya-san?"

"What?" She turns around, frown on her face, and that-

That is a lot of fur.

She blinks at him, finding a pair of steady grey eyes amidst a field of ridiculously fluffy fur that crowds up beneath his clothes, sticking out haphazardly in a way that should be off-putting but she finds herself entirely distracted because *showers*? Did he just drag all that wet fur around with him for hours afterwards? And what about *brushing*?

Because it's impeccably cared for, a bit dusty from the fighting, likely, but he'd clearly devoted time to make sure he looked good.

She remembers the Addams family cartoon and had this guy been shorter he would have made for a good audition for Cousin It she acknowledges in the privacy of her mind.

It's really too bad it had never been made in this world. She rather missed the flare of Gomez and Morticia.

"Shishikura, he came after you, didn't he?"

"Pom-Pom? Yeah. What about it?" she asks gruffly, giving him a wary look.

“I thought so.” There’s disapproval in the weight of his voice. “He was probably terribly rude to you. You must have been offended.”

Katsuki had been offended for entirely different reasons than the fact that he was a mouthy idiot.

She had dealt with mouthy idiots all her life, it wasn’t exactly something new.

“He has a bad habit of trying to force his values on others.”

I noticed, Katsuki thinks, mouth curling, unsure where he was going with it.

“He couldn’t help himself when he saw someone as notorious as you.” He has strangely intent eyes, amidst the fur, and they don’t veer from hers for a second. “We’d like to build a good relationship with U.A. moving forward so please accept our apology.”

“I’m not in U.A. anymore,” Katsuki snorts. “You’re looking to the wrong person to make amends with.”

“We will all leave our schools but it doesn’t mean we represent them any less, or that we lose our connection to them. You are still part of your classmates life.” Katsuki isn’t quite sure what to make of those words, or the tone, or anything, frankly, as he gives a small bow of his head before turning to Himiko. “Camie, you need to stop disappearing on your own, come here.”

Katsuki’s gaze shifts to the Loudmouth behind him when Fluffy’s head moves to turn and her fingers curls down tight, her foot shifting forward, but Shouto is already three steps in front of her and she pauses.

“Hey, Crew-cut.” Loudmouth pauses in a half-turn, the ugly angry look on his face forced back badly. “Did I do something to offend you?”

So blunt, Katsuki snorts, turning on her heel but-

“Nah, you’ll have to forgive me but.” There’s something ugly in his voice. “It’s because you’re Endeavour’s son.”

You’re saying what now?

“I hate **all** of you.” It’s a declaration, a suriety and belief to his fucking

right. “You’ve changed a lot since then but those eyes... looks just like Endeavour’s.”

It’s one thing to judge a person on their own actions, Katsuki thinks as she twists around, *but it’s a another fucking thing entirely to judge someone on the actions of their fucking abusive, piece of shit, father.*

“Wow, I didn’t think it was possible but you Shiketsu are just proving to be shittier and shitter,” she drawls, planting her elbow on Shouto’s shoulder and putting her weight on him.

“Touya Katsuki, apprenticed to Endeavour.” His gaze sharpens on her. “If you pass today you are going to be serving under *him*.”

“Are you going to hate me too on that basis alone? Because I can give you far better reasons to hate me, I assure you.” Katsuki draws her lips back to flash teeth.

“Why would I care for the words of someone like you who willingly accepted a position under such a man?” He raises his head high, looking down at her, and it’s fucking *ironic* how much he resembles Endeavour in that moment.

“Oh fuck off your high horse, I’m my own fucking person and so is Shouto. *His father’s eyes*, really, congrats, genetics is a damn thing. Maybe Shiketsu’s curricular doesn’t offer such basic things in their but U.A. for sure does.” She looks to Fluffy who had turned back to them at the commotion. “You Shiketsu are really proving to be the shittiest sort of Heroes-to-be, it’s rather disappointing, really.”

“Yoarashi! Come here!”

I’m going to make damn sure you don’t pass today, Katsuki thinks as Loudmouth’s eyes darkens and her own mouth stretches fiendish in response.

-

“You didn’t need to defend me,” Shouto says quietly as Aizawa appears, his gaze zeroing on Shinsou who gives him a sheepish look. “I’m used to it.”

“People like that make shitty Heroes and the world already have enough of those,” Katsuki mutters before turning sharply towards him. “You are not *him*. He had no right to make that comparison so don’t go getting any ideas.”

His mouth quirks up at the corner. "Not our father's children, are we?"

"He's never met Fuyumi if he can go around sprouting idiotic stuff like that," she huffs. "Your brothers would take well to such a comparison," she says in a quiet breath, holding his gaze. "And neither should you. Don't let others dictate what makes you *you*."

"Feeling philosophical today?"

"I'm feeling like biting someone."

"That's unhygienic, please refrain."

-

Katsuki finds herself in the infirmary after Hagakure rats her out and she'd honestly forgotten all about the blisters so that's on her for being an idiot, apparently.

Shinsou looks amused beside her, leaning back on his arms on his own bed as Recovery Girl pokes and prods at her back and shoulder, trying not to twitch with every single little touch.

"You're supposed to blow up your opponents, not yourself, you know?" Shinsou's head tilts to the side, smudges dark beneath his eyes, capture weapon loose around his neck after he'd shrugged halfheartedly back into his clothes.

"Fuck if I was getting myself turned into a squishy little ball of some sorts." Recovery Girl clicks her tongue with displeasure, leaning back, *finally*. "You'd have done the same thing."

"I have not once, in my life, thought about smearing myself in nitroglycerin and setting it off," he says dryly.

"And *you* better not be thinking about doing it again!" Recovery Girl shoves gummi bears at her and Katsuki is accepting them before her brain has time to think twice about it, giving the handful a somewhat blank look as her fingers slowly folded down over them. "Honestly, you could have done all sort of irrevocable harm to yourself. Do you have any *idea* how many nerve endings are in your back?"

"A lot." She tilts her head up and pours the gummies into her mouth.

"A lot," Recovery Girl agrees, disapproval clear. "That you need for

things like *walking*.”

“I was careful,” Katsuki says sourly, tongue pushing up to pry a gummi from her corner teeth. “I know the limits of my quirk.”

“You were *lucky*. Nitroglycerin is an enormously unstable ag-“

“I *know*,” Katsuki growls in irritation because it’s *her* fucked-up quirk and she’s spent *eight fucking years* intimately aware of just what she’s capable of if she slips up. “But it’s just fucking blisters, not like I went and blew a limb off.”

She’s not Mini Might, thank you very fucking much.

It had been a gamble and it was a gamble that *paid off* and Katsuki had given it its due consideration.

Become a tiny fleshy ball incapable of moving or risk some burns? Easy choice.

Recovery Girl’s eyes are none too impressed and Katsuki bares her teeth at her only to get a *thwap* on her forehead from her clipboard and-

She falters, lips pulling down, heart aching painfully with a longing that leaves her off-kilter as she turns her head away, teeth digging into the skin of the inside of her cheek.

“- careful with the skin you have left, burns aren’t to play with and the fact that you’ve avoided infection so far is a miracle-“

Katsuki’s dead sure it has to do with her quirk, not fucking miracles. Mitsuki-

Mitsuki had blemish free skin, a result of the glycerine produced by her pores, wounds healing up without scars and despite nearing her forties she was regularly mistaken for being much younger.

It wasn’t like anyone would be publishing a study on the healing properties of fucking *nitroglycerin* but Katsuki had been fucking stupid with a lot of her burns and they’d never gotten more than mildly infected, red and a bit itchy from her touching them too much.

《What the fuck happened to you?》 she asks Shinsou as Recovery Girl turns her back to them to rummage through one of the lockers, muttering to herself as she did. 《C-a-m-i-e responsible?》 Katsuki

considers it and then makes the sign for C and then *Fox* with a curl of her thumb and index finger into a circle which she wiggles over her nose.

Foxes were tricksters and shape shifters but it could be taken differently, considering the generous chest of Himiko's disguise, and it's crude but *clever*.

Shinsou's dry look isn't too impressed.

《Yes,》 he tells her and Katsuki raises a brow. 《She toyed with us, we didn't stand a chance.》 He narrows his eyes. 《She said something to Mina but I was too far away to hear it, she's been pretty quiet ever since. I think it shook her up. Any ideas?》

Katsuki's mouth thins.

《No,》 she admits.

《You need to talk to her. Afterwards.》

《I will.》 Her hands twists a bit too forcefully on the word because of *course* she fucking would, *why would he even-*

《You didn't deny it when Camie called you her best friend.》 Shinsou's gaze is hard to read, not judging exactly, but perhaps trying to understand, Katsuki thinks as she looks at him. 《It meant a lot to Mina when you allowed her to hug you and now this stranger waltzed in, beat us both soundly and hung all over you. I'm serious – *talk to her*. Friendship is a two-way street and you owe her more than what you're giving.》

Katsuki clenches her teeth but-

There's guilt twisting in her chest because Mina had been late nights together, shoulders bumping, friendship shirts and resolute kindness where Katsuki had known little of it.

She doesn't understand it.

She wants to.

And yet she hadn't even bothered to get Mina a fucking gift for her birthday and it's a knowledge that settles heavy in her gut.

Himiko gives her a wave from the group of Shiketsu students when Katsuki returns and she gives her a mildly exasperated look back before getting snagged by the back of her collar.

She blinks as Aizawa's face appears too close to her own, the bags dark beneath his eyes, a sincere and utter exhaustion wafting off him, and Katsuki finds herself trapped by dark eyes that studies hers.

"I understand an old friend of yours is here." His voice lends weight to his words despite remaining low and Shinsou doesn't as much as pause the fucking *bastard*. "Do I need to be worried?"

"I resent the implication that I only make friends with Villains," Katsuki grumbles to him.

"I want to trust you, Touya, but the safety of my class is my first priority. I need you to tell me that your friend is not someone I need to be worried about." His gaze is searching.

Katsuki's shoulders curl up defensively. "I haven't seen her in years," she hisses at him. "She's here taking the fucking Hero exam like all of us, just because we used to be in the same class doesn't mean I know shit all about anything."

It's fucking *irrational* to be angry about it but despite the truth of the matter, despite the fact that he had every reason to worry, it still *stings* to be distrusted.

His hand slides down to squeeze her shoulder but the touch itches and claws at her and she draws impossible tenser, her mouth curling down as she looks away from him.

"I'm on your side, Touya," he tells her quietly and his voice is heavy. "But I needed to be certain."

It's not an apology and it's not like-

It's not like she wants one.

She really doesn't.

-

Himiko tilts her head with a low hum, mouth curling up in a secretive smile.

Chapter End Notes

Whoo, welcome to another chapter in this mess.

There are consequences to being drawn between two very different sides of life and Aizawa isn't being cruel, I think it would be entirely unrealistic for him not to question and doubt for all that he wants the best for her in his own way.

Especially when she's involved with 1-A, still, those under his protection and who are young, still.

Katsuki is playing a very dangerous game and nothing is easy in life.

Regarding stuff: she's not exactly being dismissive of the fact that Shinsou and Mina got roughed up but as we know, she has a pretty odd relationship with violence, and that's a thing that she doesn't always keep in mind.

Case point: she forgot she burnt up half of her back and a good bit of her shoulder and arm because it's not a priority.

Shinsou is being a really good friend to Mina and Katsuki both here. He has his own issues to pick with Katsuki and yet - here we are.

Thank you for all your wonderful comments and support and just - let me love you all. Bless.

I'm artsy-death on tumblr if you're about there and this has been chapter 55 of In The End.

I hope you enjoyed!

The Provisional Hero Exam pt. 5

Chapter Notes

Sparky = Kaminari

Punk = Jirou

Ponytail = Yaoyorozu

Mini Might = Midoriya

Class Rep = Iida

Duct Tape = Sero

Fluffy = Mora Nagamasa

Fake = Shindo Yo

Loudmouth = Yoarashi Inasa

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Katsuki finds herself actually speechless as she watches Loudmouth unleash a damn *tornado* among the supposedly *hurt civilians*.

The entire thing is a train wreck. She's mildly impressed by how absolutely useless people are managing to be around her. It's amazing. What the ever loving *fuck*.

Save every life you can!

"Are they actual idiots?" she breathes.

"Mou, did you expect anything else from Heroes, Kasu-chan?" She turns her head to glance over her shoulder as Himiko approaches her, arms behind her head and eyes gleaming as she drew them down. "Rushing head-first to even the slightest chance of glory."

"What are you doing here?"

Himiko jumps down, moving elegantly before diving forward and Katsuki shifts one foot back to compensate as the other girl looped her arms around her neck, putting all her weight on her to a small grunt as Katsuki tried not to cringe from the strange feeling.

She relaxes slowly, but she can't quite shake off the oddity of it even as she draws one across Himiko's back in a squeeze.

"I'm here to work with Kasu-chan, of course!" She draws back, her smile quirked in a way that would have shown her fangs had she

been in her actual form. “Everyone else is so *boring*.”

“Not enjoying Shiketsu?” Katsuki asks, amused.

“They’re all about rules, Kasu-chan! And dignity! I don’t think they know what *fun* is!” She blows her cheeks out in a pout.

“I hope you haven’t gotten me into too much trouble,” Katsuki murmurs as Himiko tilts her head. “I don’t actually know this Camie.”

“Of course not!” And Himiko actually sounds *affronted* which makes Katsuki blink at her. “I was really careful! You *did* go to the same school, I researched, Kasu-chan, *researched*. All for you! And Dabi says you met up a lot in the time frame so- so you can say that’s when you made friends and when I knocked her out I made sure to aim for her head!” Himiko shoves her face close. “I did that, for *you*.”

Katsuki snorts, bopping her finger against her nose to a surprised wrinkle of it.

“I hear you, I’m sorry for doubting you.”

“I wanted to surprise you,” Himiko says somewhat petulantly and Katsuki knows she’s not quite off the hook for her eyes are cat-like in their intensity. “Aren’t you happy?”

“I am,” Katsuki says, because she *is*.

“I want Kasu-chan to be with me but I want you to *want* to be with me or it won’t be any fun.” Himiko’s mouth curls a bit unsurely and it’s an odd look on her. “I don’t understand why you’re here but I thought that – maybe if I came here I would understand a little bit and I *like* Mina-chan,” Himiko murmurs with a contemplative little quirk of her lip. “She doesn’t try to hide what she is.”

“Just like you,” Katsuki breathes quietly.

Himiko tilts her head. “I guess I’m fine sharing you if it’s with her and Dabi. Even if I want to keep you for myself,” she pouts. “I don’t like Heroes, they’re boring and they’re always trying to tell me what to do and I don’t like that. But you’re going to be a Hero and that’s really weird, you know, Kasu-chan?”

“I know.”

“But you never try to tell me what to do and you didn’t say anything

to your teacher, even when it got you in trouble with him.” Himiko touches her fingers to her brow, her touch soft. “It made me *happy*, Kasu-chan.”

“I’m not-“ Katsuki breathes out roughly. “I’m not going to pretend I agree with the League but you’re *mine* and I’m not going to let them take you away.” She searches brown eyes. “Just because I’m becoming a *Hero* doesn’t mean that’s going to change.”

“I still think you’re being silly,” Himiko admits with a wrinkle of her nose. “You’re *happy* with us.”

“I am,” Katsuki says gruffly. “But I’m- I can’t *not* do this.”

And maybe it’s ultimately useless, maybe she’s just setting herself up for failure and losing *everything* but she can’t just *fuck off* as much as she really wants to. She wants to talk to Mina and figure out what’s going on there, she wants to *try* being a better friend and a better-

A better *person* to Mitsuki and Masaru who gave her *so much* when she had *nothing*.

She wants to stop feeling like her world is tipping and shivering around her, to lose her footing as faces and surroundings twists around her because something is fucked up in her head and it has been ever since two parts of her died.

She can’t just abandon Fuyumi and Shouto or even Natsuo to whatever is going on in that household because she’s not good but she’s not *that bad*.

And she wants Dabi and Himiko to choose *better* but she doesn’t think she can do that if she leaves everything else behind.

“Then- I’ll forgive you if you give me a kiss!” Himiko still has her arms around her and they tighten around her neck. “You’re always kissing Dabi so I want one too! From Kasu-chan.”

Katsuki grimaces. “When you’re back in your normal form.”

Himiko perks up. “Promise?”

“I promise.” Katsuki reaches up to give her arm a small tug and Himiko relinquishes her hold willingly enough. “You wanted to work with me?”

Himiko's eyes glitters. "Wouldn't it be funny," she says. "If I were to *pass*."

Katsuki lets out a small huff, not quite a laugh but perhaps close.

She stretches her arms out above her head and rolls her neck as Himiko looks at her, a smile of anticipation curling her lips.

"Then let's go save some fake civilians."

-

There are some with some actual brains and Katsuki thinks she can appreciate that as she works side-by-side with Fluffy to clear up the rubble to make place for 'choppers' while other students worked around her, some quickly working to set up a chain of command.

Himiko dips in and out, her voice carrying as she returned with a hurt civilian that she dumped off with some consideration of care before shuddering and offering her a grimace before disappearing again.

Some stragglers from 1-A appears and Katsuki makes eye-contact with Ponytail who has a man on her back and who gives her a tense tilt of her head before she gets a sharp nod back and approaches those who claimed the first aid area under their control.

More follows after that and Katsuki sees both Mina and Shinsou, Duct Tape and Mini Might who have a very odd smile on his face as he hurries in.

1-A hadn't had any search and rescue courses, Katsuki is only up to date because she spends far too much time consuming and studying patterns to make her own judgement of what she sees on the television during live broadcasts.

She folds into her role easily enough, keeping a sharp eye out and heading-off when called because people were 'trapped' and it's a very different application of her quirk to build just enough sweat in her palm to set off a controlled explosion to clear rubble out of the way to reach those 'buried' but she *can*.

It's... an interesting test of her limits, she decides, as she dips two of her fingers into her palms and smears it out carefully.

She gets a bit twitchy from slaps on her shoulders but she stays in the background when it comes to the whole *talking and comforting*

because, yeah, no, Katsuki has her limits.

Himiko clearly has too and Katsuki snorts as she makes a large circle around one of the ‘crying children’, clearly pretending not to hear as she joined up alongside Sparky who greets her just a tad too cheerfully as she bent down to take the legs of a heavyset man as he heaved up the shoulders.

“Hey, Touya? Touya!”

Katsuki blinks, grasping for her headphones and dragging them up as she switched her mic on, absently making eye contact with Fluffy and waving him over.

“Hagakure?”

“Oh! I was hoping you were still on this channel – we have a problem!”

“What kind of problem?” Grey eyes regard her intently as he steps up beside her and Katsuki shoves a hand down her back pouch, fishing for one of the extra ear pieces there, linked to her earphones with no mic feedback, and shoving them at him.

He slips them in without question and – huh, apparently he had a pair of ears hidden among the fur.

Whether human or not remained to be seen.

“- something is happening in the Eastern Entrance. There were several dark clad figures moving out, same uniform and all, they’re clearly not part of those being rescued. I think – I think it might be an attack? They have weapons and-“

“EVERYONE!” Fluffy’s voice rises sharp and so sudden that Katsuki jerks instinctively away from him, hand folding over the mic as Hagakure squeaked in surprise. “WE HAVE A POTENTIAL ENEMY ATTACK INCOMING!”

And that...

That took care of that, Katsuki supposes, head turning sharply up and a grin curling in anticipation as the first explosion rang out.

-

Katsuki has no fucking idea how Hagakure is doing it but she lobs the four extra ear pieces out to those who had taken control of the

different areas as she keeps relying information down.

Wherever she'd managed to perch herself had to be high and with her being invisible it would be next to impossible to sniff her out with so many buildings crowding around them.

It's fucking *genius*.

Katsuki would spare a moment to appreciate it but she twists the dial on her headphones to mute all noise around her and kicks off her shoes before exploding into a hard twist before kicking Fake out of the path of Gang Orca.

Her palms slams down with a twist and a large explosion rockets off from her feet into his face as she twisted with it before pushing away to land on her feet with a backward slide.

Ultrasonic waves, capable of paralyzing his foes.

The world is silent around her, not a single sound reaching her, and Katsuki's smile curls sharp.

Gang Orca, the Number Ten Hero.

They're not kidding around.

Broad shouldered and finely clad despite the head of a killer whale lowering to peer at her with red ringed eyes, mouth moving.

But Katsuki has never given herself a crash course in reading whale lips. Mouths.

Whatever the fuck orcas had going for them.

The noise cancelling headphones on her ears are the finest Endeavour's money could buy and she flexes her fingers with a little tilt of her head as she shifted her weight to the balls of her feet as she kicks off in a quick step sequence before twisting, fingers curling tight around the middle of her palm as Gang Orca calmly followed her with a turn of his head.

Just need to keep him back, I can't win this, Katsuki reminds herself as the sweet burning scent of nitroglycerin built sharp to a flare of her nose.

The shot fires off hot and burning from the concentrated force and it leaves her palm smarting as she dropped down in a sharp crouch and-

There's a violent gust of wind and she sinks down into a low crouch, arms over her head as Loudmouth whipped past her, her feet sliding before she snags out and gets hold of a slab of concrete and halt as flames whips past her in hot pursuit, the wind twisting it all wrong in a backlash that rushes towards her and Katsuki has a moment of *oh for fuck-*

And then someone was colliding roughly with her with enough force to send them both crashing behind a large slab of concrete and Katsuki blinks up at Himiko.

She gets a pat on her head and – Katsuki huffs as she pushes herself up, the other shifting to settle in her lap.

"Thanks," she breathes, shouldering her earpiece off. "That would have been bad."

"You smell sweet." Himiko pokes at her. "You would have gone *boom*."

"Probably," Katsuki admits with a grimace. "Haven't really had time to change my clothes."

Himiko tilts her head. "Wait here," she says, pushing back in a weirdly smooth movement before disappearing and Katsuki resists the urge to drag her fingers through her hair because there's nitroglycerin clinging to her fingers and she'd wiped her palms off on both her jacket and pants on several occasion to avoid smearing it on everything.

It's a fucking *hazard* and she peers out to see that Mini Might had gotten himself involved in the ruckus, Shouto and Loudmouth still screwing around, clearly, which was fucking idiotic and she'd be surprised if they'd pass with *this*.

They both had volatile quirks, capable of destruction, and they were using it to lash out at each other instead of bothering with the supposed *Villain*. Idiots.

She takes some satisfaction in that Gang Orca doesn't look very impressed either. He was supposed to be fair, Katsuki knows that. He and Best Jeanist were both involved in a lot of programs to help *lost youths* and he was known to donate a lot of money to charity.

Shit, he made for a good Villain though, an orca, really, *how*.

She meets green eyes and the worry in them catches her off-guard before he turns, mouth moving sharply, clearly unhappy, and she glances towards Loudmouth and Shouto who are both staring at her.

She gives them the middle finger, teeth baring.

Himiko returns with a small bounce and in her arms is a Shiketsu coat that she proffers proudly.

-

“You okay?” Katsuki blinks as Mini Might touches down beside her with lightning dancing up his skin. “I saw what happened and with your *quirk*—”

“I didn’t blow up, obviously,” she mutters a bit grumpily, glancing towards Himiko who had thrown herself into the low level grunts with clear delight as she twisted and turned, practically dancing as she tore through them.

“I thought he was more reasonable than this,” Katsuki mutters, one earpiece shoved off just enough to be able to hear him. “At least they’re buying time.”

“Todoroki-kun is sensitive when it comes to being compared to his father.” Mini Might turns his head to look at the other boy. “But it’s no excuse.”

“They both hate the guy, you’d think they’d find some peace in that,” she grumbles, wondering *what* exactly Mini Might knew about the entire situation.

A gust of wind whips past them, ruffling the edges of the coat around her bare thighs, but it’s long and she can see Fluffy with his bare hairy upperbody on full-display a good bit away, hair twisting and curling around those who approached and ensnaring them.

“How sensitive hearing do you reckon orcas have?”

“Well, they use high-frequency waves to communicate which would mean that their hearing would have to be really—”

“Sensitive, got it.” Katsuki narrows her eyes and then gives him a considering look. “Think you can get me behind him?”

Mini Might blinks, turning towards her.

“My explosives are *loud*,” she says a bit sourly. “He’ll notice me long before I can get close. Your kicking didn’t seem to do much but there are other ways to level the field.”

“A-are you sure?” Mini Might looks not *nervous* exactly but there’s an unsure little tilt to his lips. “I know you don’t like touching other people and-“

“I *don’t*,” Katsuki interrupts before he could go off on a tangent. “Can you or can you not?” she demands, meeting his gaze.

Mini Might draws a sharp breath and then exhales, his shoulders straightening out.

“I can,” he promises her firmly.

-

Katsuki places a bare foot down on Mini Might’s shoulder as he twisted in a violent whip of power that sent her hurtling towards Gang Orca as ice climbed high in the sky, wind tearing it down, a stray piece tearing her cheek open before she landed hard on his shoulders, barely knocking him forward as she curled her legs tight around his neck and blew her palms off by his ears as his hand found her ankle.

It’s loud. It’s close to his ears. Katsuki has no idea how his hearing is affected by his quirk but it sure fucking *smarts* as he jerks beneath her, hands tightening dangerously, and she smears her palms over every single inch she can reach, scrabbling and grasping at his clothes as he jerked sharply at her.

It’s fucking *undignified* and she’s just wearing a too big coat and fucking boxers which is *ridiculous* but his movement is limited by odd contraptions of metal around his arms as she digs her fingers and toes into him and bites down on the coat like thing on his back and-

That’s a regret, Katsuki finds quickly as her teeth scrapes against the odd surface before he manages to pull her off with a very unhappy look into red ringed eyes before he drew his arm back.

He throws her with a hard jerk of his shoulder and she rolls before she manages to get her hands and feet beneath her and she drew a sharp breath because *fuck, that’s some muscle strength-*

Mini Might touches down beside her and Katsuki lurches up to curl an arm around his neck as lightning danced across his skin, carrying

them off and out of the way as a roar of fire whipped past them, egged on by the wind that whips and tears, a fiery tornado blossoming up and-

That's... something.

She's thought at least Loudmouth out for the count but, apparently not, and she shoves her earphones off with her shoulder to hear the explosions going off inside as the heat licks up against them, Mini Might landing in a crouch to allow Katsuki to slide off him without touching her palms against him.

She tugs her coat off and wipes her palms as well as she can against it because she'd been half hanging off Gang Orca and she has no idea how much nitroglycerin she'd managed to smear onto herself but it's sure to be a lot more than she wanted to drag around.

"Touya!" Mini Might waves his hands frantically. "You can't just--"

She lobbs the coat a good distance away and the heat of the tornado blows it up with a *bang!* that they both stare at.

Katsuki snorts and then shivers slightly because she's in nothing but a pair of boxers and it's early autumn which means the air is fucking *nippy*.

"H-here!" A jacket appears in her vision and she pauses, glancing at Mini Might who is red faced and turned away from her, and she rolls her eyes before grabbing it and slipping it on, zipping it up with a tug.

It still leaves her in a pair of bright pink boxers and the jacket is a bit small but – not much she can do about that.

Eh. Not like she *cares*.

"Katsuki-chan!" She turns her head and finds Himiko looking entirely too delighted as she jumped down a slab of concrete to slide the rest of the way towards them. "Are you being *naughty*?"

"Yes," Katsuki deadpans. "It was getting so hot and heavy here I couldn't help myself."

Mini Might spins towards her, looking rather horrified which is – objectively hilarious, Katsuki thinks as she takes the time to spare him a considering look.

“No! No that’s not – I was merely helping her and-!” Mini Might drags a hand down his red face as both Himiko and Katsuki stares at him in various levels of enjoyment. “You’re mean,” he complains, voice muffled against his palm, peering at her accusingly.

Himiko giggles as she latches onto Katsuki’s arm, cheek pressing against her shoulder.

“You’re cute.”

Mini Might, if possible, goes even redder.

“I’m- I’m gonna go check on Todoroki-kun!” He turns and kicks off in a cloud of dust towards the inferno still going on in the background and Katsuki officially clocks herself out because she’s half-nude and the evacuation looked to be about done.

“Been having fun?” she asks as she allows herself to be tugged along.

“I fought so many Heroes today,” Himiko sighs dreamily. “And they were all pretending to be Villains while I was pretending to be a *Hero!*”

-

“Touya! Your clothes!” Ponytail is the first to spot them, a small gathering from 1-A turning around towards her, all of them back in their regular clothing.

Katsuki had only come in her Hero suit because Endeavour had all but dragged her off in the morning so she hadn’t bothered with a tour to the changing rooms.

“Mou, I guess that’s my cue. Seeya later, Kasu-chan.” Himiko presses up to plant a kiss on her cheek as Katsuki blinks before she disappeared in the opposite direction of the small gathering of Shiketsu students and Katsuki wonders if she should be *concerned*.

Ponytail is already unbuttoning the lower part of her shirt, stomach shimmering as she pulled out a pair of pants, and Katsuki’s catches them and then the t-shirt that follows, a dark blue thing with a grinning cat that perfectly matches the one on the back of her pink boxers.

Which is fucking *cheeky*.

“Class Rep-“ He swivels around towards her, shoulders broad and proud, the wide gesture of his arms interrupted as she threw Mini Might’s sweater at him. “Tell him to fucking wash it, there’s going to be nitroglycerin on it.”

He shoves it out and away from his body. “I will make sure it is properly taken care of, Touya-san!” he promises her, turning carefully. “You can trust me!”

Katsuki gives him a flat look and then rolls her eyes as she pulls the t-shirt over her head and tugs it in place.

“Thanks,” she tells Ponytail gruffly.

She smiles and it’s a soft and kind thing. “Can’t have you getting a cold. What’s your shoe size?”

Katsuki soon has a pair of loafers to shove her feet into, a scarf, and a downy orange jacket that she falls instantly in love with as she sinks into it.

“Aah, I’m nervous!” Sparky exclaims, flailing.

“The waiting in the worst,” Punk agrees, rocking back on her heels.

“As long as we all did our best.” Ponytail puts a comforting hand on her shoulder and Katsuki snorts as Punk’s cheeks turn pink with a soft stuttered agreement.

Katsuki sees Mini Might watching Shouto who is standing with his back towards them a good bit away and she chews on the inside of her cheek before breathing out and angling her head to peer up at the large stadium as the speakers blared for their attention.

Chapter End Notes

Himiko might not always make life easy for Katsuki but I also think that we all struggle with change. She's no longer allowed to be a natural part of Katsuki's life, things are shifting and that's scary and Himiko is obsessive by nature.

But at the same time she wants to live life on her own conditions and she wants the same for Katsuki and that... clashes a bit oddly with her whims and wishes.

Katsuki and Himiko are, by nature, both very selfish people. Kind

in some ways, cruel in others, and they both favour those they care for above the rest of the world.

We're getting some Mina content soon, I promise. She has been suspiciously absent but she has her reasons.

I'm on tumblr as artsy-death if you're around there and this has been chapter 56 of In The End and the last chapter of the Pro-Hero Provisional Exam! How exciting.

Thank you all you wonderful people, I love reading and responding to your comments, it is ever a delight.

I hope you enjoyed!

Our Hero Society

Chapter Notes

Mini Might = Midoriya

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Katsuki flips the card in her hand, staring down at the face at the front of it.

Blonde spiky hair, red eyes looking out, an unhappy downward twist of the corner of the lip.

TOUYA KATSUKI

GROUND ZERO

What's in a Hero?

She closes her eyes and wishes she'd thought to bring her cigarettes as her hand creeps beneath her shirt under the open jacket, letting her fingertips run over the gnarly scar tissue before pausing and sliding it back out.

"So this is where you've been hiding out."

Katsuki opens her eyes, turning to peer over her shoulder at Mina who'd forgone the school uniform for a soft looking hoodie and jeans, a stylish short jacket worn over it.

Dark sclera, the golden of her eyes catching in the light of the lowering sun.

"I've been looking everywhere for you," she continues when Katsuki doesn't immediately answer, approaching to peer up at her.

She looks around before shrugging and crouching down, springing up high to catch the lowest branch, nimbly making her way up, and Katsuki shifts to make place as she pulls herself up on the one she'd claimed for herself, their shoulders brushing as Mina settled down with a puff of mist as she breathed out.

"You passed then?" Her hand reaches for the card in Katsuki's hand and she hands it over with a flip of her fingers.

"I heard you did too, congrats," Katsuki says as Mina studies the card.

"Yours is different from mine," the other girl says after a moment.

"Look, here-"

Katsuki doesn't need to look but she shifts to drop her cheek against Mina's shoulder, eyes finding the section that marked her as belonging to Endeavour's Hero Agency.

"I guess it's official then," Mina hums. "You're not coming back to U.A."

"Doubt they would have let me back anyway," Katsuki says tiredly, feeling strangely exhausted, perhaps melancholic.

Was this really why she'd joined U.A.? To become this farce of a Hero, shoved under the thumb of the new Number One Hero whose son she was-

"You don't look very happy about passing," Mina observes keenly and Katsuki huffs, because she's used to shoving down some emotions, carrying others, grasping for anger more times than not.

But anger doesn't come as easy when she's with Mina, not anymore, and it's a strange thing but perhaps it's okay too.

"Just thinking," Katsuki admits.

"Sometimes I think you need to do a little bit of less thinking," Mina teases but it's a gentle thing. "Is it because of, you know-" She looks around but Katsuki had picked a good spot away from everyone. "Dabi and Toga?" Her voice is a hush.

"Partly." Katsuki frowns. "There's just... a lot."

Mina hums.

"I was watching you today, you know?" There's a contemplative note to her voice. "After the first task. At first I didn't know what to feel because you're hard to understand sometimes. But I thought and then I thought some more and I watched and I realised that jealousy didn't feel right because you're my best friend but that doesn't mean I own you. And honestly, it was a bit odd but anyone who can make you loosen up a bit is good in my books."

Mina's legs swings absently, her head tilted back, and Katsuki shifts

her head just enough to be able to study the curve of her jaw.

“But you let very few close to you and you were happy to see Camie but you were also weirdly tense about it, as if you couldn’t quite decide how to react to her even as you did that half-smile thing of yours.” Her brow creases. “Katsuki?”

“Yeah?” she voices cautiously.

“That wasn’t *really* Camie, was it?” Mina angles her head to peer down at her with golden eyes and for all that the words ring in her ears the other looks remarkably calm. “That was Toga, wasn’t it?”

“What makes you say that?” Katsuki wonders if she should deny it but – she’s curious, she decides, especially as the corner of Mina’s lip quirks up.

“Ochako-chan and Tsuyu-chan described the encounter they had with her in the forest. Her fixation with blood and then you – I can put one and two together.” She lowers the card, fingers curling tight around it. “I didn’t say anything to Aizawa-sensei,” she admits. “I wanted to, at first, but she told me these *things* and I just.” She blows out a breath. “Katsuki, do you ever- do you sometimes think that maybe there’s something not quite right with our Hero Society?”

Katsuki slowly drags herself off Mina, angling to study her, and golden eyes peers back at her from their dark depth, teeth dragging against her lower lip.

“You’re... going to have to explain that a little bit more,” Katsuki says finally.

“I don’t think-“ Mina’s voice halts. “I don’t think I’ve wanted to consider the large picture of things, you know? But you’re my *friend* and I’m not blind to the things that’s just – wrong.” Her mouth curls. “I know that what happened at the Sports Festival wasn’t good, and I know- you worried me after it so I knew it wasn’t okay, what he did, and I had this bad feeling in my gut when I saw you. And then- at the exam, when he beat you *so bad*, and even Midoriya came out really bad when all the other teachers barely scraped us, and- nothing ever came from that either!” She curls her shoulders. “I know you aren’t really sixteen but *he* didn’t know that at the time and even if he had – it still wouldn’t have been okay! But it’s like – just because he’s All Might I’m supposed to be okay with it and I don’t understand how that is.”

Mina's eyes searches hers and Katsuki is still, one hand curling around the branch between them.

"I don't know what you want, Katsuki, and I'm not sure you know it either, but I know you and I know that you wouldn't have picked to work with Endeavour if you didn't have a choice because you're clearly very unhappy with it. And that means that, once again, a Hero is misusing their status to do what they want and it's not- it's not what being a Hero is supposed to be about. And if they can do it with you – under the nose of U.A. and the police and everyone – then what else is going on out there?"

A lot, Katsuki thinks but doesn't say because she wants Mina to finish up her thoughts without interrupting because her tone is picking up and it's clearly something that had been building up for some time now.

"Hitoshi and I talk a lot and we talk about *you*." Katsuki isn't exactly surprised to hear that nor does she feel any particular way about it. "You're actually the topic of a lot of conversations in the dorm," Mina admits with a small quirk of her lips but it's a thing that doesn't reach her eyes. "To be from a world without Heroes or quirks – I cannot even begin to imagine what that's like because it's so *normal* here. But you are and I think – I think that means you look at things a bit different and while you're not really vocal about it you're not... I know you well enough to confidently say that you're not happy with a lot of things about the Hero Society."

Mina reaches out and taps her fingers against her shirt, pausing at the feel of the gnarly skin and slowly flattening her palm out to rest against it.

"When you were kidnapped," Mina says slowly. "And I realised that you knew them, that you- the way you just." She breathes out. "You don't agree with them, and you came back, I know that, but I think- I think that maybe you do agree with *some* of the things they were saying and I think- I don't know but I *think* that's why you're just kinda in the middle of things because you're kinda angry about a lot of things going on everywhere. So I wanted – I wanted to hear what you think," Mina says finally. "Because being a Hero is supposed to be about being *good* but now I'm thinking it's not that simple."

"If you want an unbiased view of the Hero Society," Katsuki cautions, "I'm not the person to give you one."

“But you can try.” Mina studies her. “Right?”

“No,” she admits with a grimace because Katsuki’s emotions run high and raw and consuming. “I am – enormously biased when it comes to Dabi and Toga, I am both angry and afraid of All Might, and Endeavour is – it’s shitty, okay? And it’s not something I can talk about because it’s not my fucking place but.” She drags a hand through her hair. “*Maybe* I can try,” she says roughly.

“Then *try*,” Mina presses, as if it’s as simple as that.

There are some things she struggles with when it comes to Mina. She doesn’t feel responsible, per say, and she thinks that she’d be doing what they have a disservice if she *did*. But Katsuki cares about her and that means she’s become more careful in what she’s saying, too, because she’s selfish and she’s sometimes cruel but she doesn’t want to be that to Mina.

Friendship is a two-way street, hadn’t Shinsou said something like that?

There are issues that Katsuki will not broach with Mina. It’s not the other girl’s place to deal with her mental health issues for one, she’s quite fine laying that entirely on Best Jeanist who was an adult and who had offered, or forced it upon her, depending on things (and Katsuki still is twitchy around the man but, fuck, okay, she gets it – she wouldn’t have listened if he hadn’t made a point out of it).

But Mina had passed just as she had, and she’d get more and more involved in the Pro-Hero world, serving in internship programs that would put her in positions where she’d *have* to be aware of the state of the world around her.

Katsuki always gets the hives when some big manly husband tries to spare his wife’s feelings in a movie for her *protection* while completely devaluing her agency. Fuck that, Katsuki wants none of that, she doesn’t want to *be that*.

But she’s also fucking aware of the fact that she’s cynical as *shit*, has trust issues a mile wide (branded and stamped in every file made on her as if knowing about it made a shit difference in dealing with it), and a moral compass with a malfunctioned hand.

That she doesn’t want to force on Mina because she *likes* that Mina is different from her. She likes that Mina trusts where Katsuki falters over and over again. She likes the ease of which Mina smiles, the way she doesn’t hesitate to step up and help when needed and the

enthusiasm that bubbles up in a high voice and excited gesturing.

It's addicting, it's not something she wants to let go of, and it's probably just a little bit twisted the way she'd rather tear the world down than see it gone.

(Katsuki knows that, without Mina, she wouldn't have hesitated when Dabi and Himiko came for her in the forest – maybe a bit, but her relationship with Mitsuki and Masaru had grown on a lie on who she was pretending to be while Himiko and Dabi had always just liked her for *her*).

Fuck.

Katsuki drags a hand over her face because she wants to try, she *does*, but she wants to do it right, too, and that's an unusual thing in itself. She wants Mina to have the perspectives needed to make up her own mind about things, not something shoved onto her by Katsuki because that might actually make her vomit.

(There are lines Katsuki will not cross and this is one and she still struggles with the implication of that, if things had rolled differently, she might have tried to take Mina down with her and that would go against everything that the other girl is and Katsuki *will not*).

She won't.

She isn't *responsible* for Mina but she has a *responsibility* as someone older to have some inch of morality when dealing with someone who is still growing and shaping their world views.

And if Katsuki can't fucking do that she's the shittiest sort of friend.

And she wants to be a *better one*.

"Look," she says after a long moment. "I think All Might screwed up things simply by being what he is," she says bluntly. "He took on this role of being *the protector of society* but he's human and he can't be everywhere and he'd been losing his power the last couple of years which means that even as media kept portraying him as this – this *all powerful figure* that's not what he *was*. The world is a shitty place and he was, at most, a band-aid to a lot of problems going on and he wasn't doing as much as the world was pretending he was."

Katsuki, quite honestly, finds it sickening how much All Might had allowed to slip by because he'd been so desperate to cling to the idea

of a *Symbol of Peace*. Because he couldn't stand as a representative of *the golden age of Heroism* when his powers had been slipping so badly through his fingers because the less he could do the more of a farce it became until it was just three fucking *hours*.

And the last half-year he'd been spending a lot of that time at U.A. dedicating his time to training a sixteen-year-old boy into taking over that same role. And *yet* his name had continued to dominate the news and it became a double-edged sword that had just-

It went wrong. So fucking *wrong*. And All Might didn't seem an inch interested in admitting to it.

"Maybe it was right and just what this world needed when he started out on it." Katsuki heroically struggles back her anger because she's still fucking *something* from their last meeting. "Statistics backs it up – he *has* done good. A shit ton of good, actually, he didn't get slapped with the *Symbol of Peace* title for nothing. But he should have stepped down when he got hurt but instead he hid it and quite frankly screwed over both himself and this world in doing so."

"How?" Mina wonders. "He might not have been able to do as much as he did but what he did – that was still good, wasn't it?"

"Yes," Katsuki agrees, ignoring the way the world flickers momentarily before settling. "And had he been any other Hero it wouldn't have fucking *mattered*. But he *isn't* just another Hero, he became so much more than that, shouldering so much of the growth of the society that is today. And All Might – he isn't stupid. He knows what the Symbol of Peace came to mean and like an *id*-" Katsuki bites down on the inside of her cheek and blows a slow breath through her nose. "He should have stepped down and let society figure itself out. But instead it became *this* and he lost his powers spectacularly, on live television, against someone no-one seems to know anything about."

"You think he, without meaning to, set society up for failing without him there?" Mina looks rather like she didn't quite know what to do with that. "That, we became too reliant on him?" Her brow furrows. "That's why he came to U.A., isn't it? Because he wants someone to-" Her eyes widens and Katsuki carefully doesn't meet her gaze because, yeah, it's fairly obvious who exactly All Might had in mind to replace him.

"The world is off-kilter." Katsuki tastes the words carefully. "It's been building up for a long-time now. Heroes have become a media circus

and those born into rough areas suffer because there's no fame to be found in helping where no-one can see it. Underground Heroes like Aizawa have been doing their best to level it out but- they're few and there's a lot of bad stuff happening in the world and people are *angry*."

She holds out her hand, flexing her fingers, feeling the strain of her shut-off sweat glands beneath the skin.

"Bad quirks, good quirks, a *Hero's* quirk and a *Villain's* quirk. They celebrate my quirk when I see nothing but the potential horror in it, the knowledge that a single moment of carelessness could mean the death of many." Her mouth twists. "Hagakure scrambles at the bottom because U.A. gears itself towards the physical quirks and overlooks the potential of having an invisible ally because it doesn't draw viewers." She breathes out. "The League, in some ways, represents the growing restlessness in society and when All Might lost his powers it just drove in the fact that even the mightiest falls. People want change and it no longer looks unattainable because All Might isn't there to uphold what was."

Stain had first set it in motion, the League had driven it home, Endeavour isn't All Might – it's just a catastrophe waiting to happen.

"It always seemed so simple," Mina hums and Katsuki glances at her, studying her expression, but she doesn't look rattled, more like she'd had something confirmed and was considering how it fit into things. "Stand up for those who can't, defeat the Villain, be the Hero." She turns the card around to the bright lettered HERO on the back of it, her thumb running over the letters. "Do you... do you believe that there's something to what the League of Villains are saying?"

"They're idiots," she says flatly and Mina gives a small startled jerk. "They want a *war* but this world – it has no concept of what that truly *means*. It's just old history here, a boring page turned at school, but in my world it was well and truly real and the war my Mom fled continued well into my twenties. Could still be going on, fuck if I know, but I hated it. War isn't a solution, it's a *cost*, and it's not something this world deserves. *But*-" Katsuki grimaces. "I *understand* why they want change and why they're not alone in wanting it."

"So you agree on some level?" Mina presses. "If they found another way of doing it then-?"

"I don't know," Katsuki admits and perhaps it's cruel of her because

Mina's mouth dips at the corner. "I do not agree with the way they're doing things as it stands now but I do not agree with the way the Hero Society is dealing with things *either*. With All Might gone something is going to change, whether we want it or not, that's just the situation we're in right now. *How* remains to be seen. But people aren't happy about Endeavour claiming the Number One spot, not even the man himself, because he's going to keep getting compared to All Might and that's not something *anyone* is going to measure up to. He's set up to fail no-matter what unless something drastically changes."

It's not like Katsuki has sympathy to spare for the man but what a shitty position to be in. Endeavour likely knew, but whether it was something he would admit to himself or not was another thing entirely.

"So either the Heroes step up or the Villains tips the scales, it's a bit of a ticking time bomb waiting to happen," she says with a shrug.

Mina is silent beside her, clearly chewing through the words, and Katsuki itches for a smoke like nothing else as she squints idly up at the setting sun, fingers twitching absently in a pattern of rhythmic counting.

"The League isn't the only trouble then," Mina says after some time. "There will be more."

"It's likely," Katsuki agrees because, yeah, with All Might gone she's quite fucking certain there would be. "There was a surge of crime committed following Stain and there's been an even bigger one now. The Heroes are doing their best to flatten it down but the unrest is spiralling and Endeavour, as he is now, won't be able to fix it. And with society putting so much weigh on a single Hero it doesn't know what to do in the aftermath of him."

"That's why Aizawa-sensei pushed us into taking the exam today, isn't it?" Mina muses. "Because he wants us to be able to defend ourselves. And- because All Might is our teacher it might not be the last time we're targeted. Especially now that he's all-" She pinches her thumb and index finger together.

"Yeah," Katsuki says, torn between amusement and feeling ruffled about it because she doesn't like the man, or agree with him, but shit, he'd put his all into it and his body had become a horror show because of it.

"No wonder you're unhappy about passing." Mina shuffles closer.

“You’re going to have to start sending me daily updates now, you know? Or you’re going to make me worry.”

Katsuki’s hand reaches up to touch against her headphones. “I can do you one better and get you a pair of headphones connected to the private channel of mine.”

“You’d be okay with that?” Mina tilts her head but there’s a gleam to her eyes. “Wouldn’t that be a breach of security or something?”

“Do I look like I care about that?” Katsuki asks dryly. “Besides, who knows that kind of shit you’ll get into, 1-A seems to attract trouble like nothing else. I’d go both ways.” It had been an absent sort of idea but the more she thinks about it the more Katsuki likes it.

Mina’s lips curl up and Katsuki knows that they’re on the same page here. “I’d like that then. It’ll be like our own secret thing and like an emergency system! Can we get matching ones?” She reaches out to tap her fingers against Katsuki’s own. “But – mine in pink, of course, and – and a purple alien head on the side of them instead of that orange X you’ve got going. You know, the oval long kind of face–” She draws both her palms down her cheeks and chin to demonstrate. “But with antennas!”

“Make a picture of it and send it to me and I’ll make sure it happens,” Katsuki says with amusement, relaxing as the other perked up. “I can’t draw worth shit.”

“I saw,” Mina giggles. “We all came together to figure out what you sketched out for Yaomomo.”

“Ask me for help again and see what happens if you’re gonna be rude about it,” Katsuki huffs.

She gets a bump against her shoulder for that one and sways with it to give a small one back.

Mina puts her weight into a second shove that Katsuki had to slam down a hand against the branch to avoid getting pushed off with a bit of a wobble before she straightened up with a snort as Mina grins.

“I do appreciate you being honest with me,” Mina says as she eyes Katsuki carefully, but when she doesn’t retaliate her shoulders eases down. “I still have to think about it and I kinda want to talk with Hitoshi about some of the things if that’s okay?”

“Go for it.” Katsuki scratches at her chin. “But – try to keep it between the two of you or me out of it.” She grimaces. “Aizawa is fine too, he probably knows, or suspects, how I view the Hero profession. And All Might.”

Katsuki is quite certain the newspapers would have a field day if it ever got out that Endeavour’s new apprentice had some vocal ideas about All Might and her name was already being dragged enough on the internet to last a lifetime. Or two.

People had some weird issues to pick with her and she’s quite certain she doesn’t want to meet at least half of them. It makes her mildly paranoid.

“Speaking of All Might – Midoriya wanted to talk to you?”

“I am ever so popular,” Katsuki grumbles with some exasperation. “But yeah, apparently he does.”

“That’s good, isn’t it?” Mina wonders and Katsuki isn’t quite in agreement about *that*. “You two need to figure things out now that he knows you’re not his childhood friend. Or, well, in some parts, but you know–”

“I know.” Katsuki drags a hand through her hair. “It’s whatever. He knew Kacchan so – I’m not going to deny him a chance to understand.” She owes the dead boy that much – his feelings on Mini Might had been complicated but there all the same.

“Just like Mitsuki and Masaru?” Mina broaches carefully. “You haven’t been to visit them.”

“They call me Amélie,” she says tiredly, emotions twisting inside of her because she *understands* but it doesn’t mean it doesn’t *hurt*. “I don’t have the mental energy to deal with that,” she admits.

“Why don’t you write them a letter?” Mina suggests after a moment and Katsuki blinks at her. “That way you don’t have to see them but you can still reach out to them.” Her head tips. “I still visit them, you know? When you were kidnapped I stayed with them for a bit. They love you, I don’t think that’s changed, not really, but it- it must have been hard to realise that things are a bit more complicated than expected.” A pause. “Maybe tell them that you don’t want to be called Amélie and- you have a new name now, right? Touya. Try to find a middle-ground on that?”

Katsuki mulls it over but – if her name was out of the question then, yes, Touya would be, not quite right, but *easier*, certainly.

“I can bring it to them,” Mina continues when Katsuki doesn’t immediately shoot it down. “Like your own personal mail delivery.”

“It’s... not a bad idea,” she says finally.

“My ideas are usually good” Mina says sagely but she presses closer, to offer her warmth and comfort, and Katsuki tips her head to rest against her shoulder with a breath that mists in the air.

“Mina?”

“Hm?”

“Are you free next Sunday?”

Chapter End Notes

There are issues when it comes to friendship between someone older and someone younger because there's a power imbalance. It doesn't matter how clever the teen, it will still be *there*. Katsuki hasn't had friends in the age bracket of her physical age before and she's twice Mina's age which she has to acknowledge in some ways if she wants to be a good friend.

It be complicated.

A conversation about Heroism has been a long-time coming between these two because Mina has concerns and Katsuki is smack-dab in the midst of that so I think this was good for them.

I think it's impossible that Mina hasn't considered the implications of things but it's also hard to reconcile something that's so ingrained in their society (the adoration for All Might, the value put on the Hero profession) with the fact that it might not be so black and white. Especially when media portrayal offers a very one-sided view on things.

Thank you so much for your love and support - I'm gonna try and catch-up with your comments properly when I find some spare time because I love chatting with you guys.

Anyway, this has been chapter 57 of In The End. I'm about on tumblr as artsy-death.

I hope you enjoyed!

Of Wings and Fangs

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Katsuki turns her head, idly looking around, hands shoved into the pockets of her pants and headphones on.

The streets are busy, people moving in thick packs across the large crossing. Everything from men and women in business clothes, children and teens heading home from schools, one or two in scuffed clothes keeping their heads lowered with hoods pulled up over their heads.

There are several with physical quirks – the sort that leaves their knees bent and heads deformed into something less human – and Katsuki glances briefly at the woman wandering past her with a click-clack of thick hooves instead of heels.

It's not raining but the skies are grey and there's a chill to the air.

"Straighten up." She side-eyes Endeavour as he steps through the doors behind her. "You're a Hero. Look like one."

She lets her head tip to the side and then slowly drags her hands from her pockets and crosses them across her chest in a mirror of his own pose, straightening her back out as she did and letting her mouth dip into a familiar frown.

She raises an eyebrow at him.

She gets an entirely unimpressed look back.

Katsuki snorts, stretching out her arms before folding them behind her head. "So what are we doing today? Wandering down the streets?" she asks idly.

"I'm dealing with a case today," Endeavour informs her, clicking his phone open and giving it a scroll before closing it shut and sliding it into one of the pouches on his belt.

"Aye, aye," Katsuki agrees and only just resists saluting as he gives her a dark suspicious look.

-

Hero work is dreadfully fucking boring Katsuki soon comes to realise.

Working with the Number One Hero might sound interesting in theory but fact of the matter is that she's too low down on the hierarchy to be allowed much near anything juicy. So instead she finds herself running errands, picking up and delivering paper, occasionally asked to track down information on a person or two without reason given as to *why*.

Sometimes she wanders down a corridor at the police station, where they find themselves more than she'd expected, and glances through a window to see Endeavour deep in conversation with Tsukauchi, the frown on his face deep and heavy.

Troubled? Is that a word that's even applicable to someone like Endeavour?

Katsuki twists the cap of her water bottle and leans back against the wall, wondering what the fuck she's even doing.

"Ground Zero." She twitches at the call of the call-sign that's becoming more and more familiar and glances up at the cat-headed police officer as he approaches with a pile of papers.

She gives it a wary look.

His fangs flashes in a sheepish sort of smile and she gives him a flat look back.

-

"That does sound boring," Mina muses through her headphones as Katsuki valiantly resists putting the papers around her on fire.

Endeavour's Hero office is big – just an enormous stretch of space with people coming and going, conversation buzzing around her, paper being delivered, the secretary answering and chatting on the phone, barely able to put it down before it buzzed once again.

There's something impressive about the way her smile doesn't waver for one fucking *second*.

Katsuki had claimed the window sill for herself, a pile of pens beside her to highlight and go through the information in-front of her.

“Have you been able to go on patrol at least?”

“I have not,” Katsuki mutters in an undertone, making sure to keep her mouth hidden in the collar of her sweater.

Mina makes a sound of sympathy through a mouthful of food before swallowing it down.

“I’m sure something exciting will happen soon!” she says encouragingly. *“He didn’t pick you for nothing.”*

Maybe he picked me to drive me inside out of sheer boredom, Katsuki thinks resentfully as she harshly underlines a sentence and draws a line to the edge before jotting down a quick note because whoever wrote the original piece is a fucking *idiot*.

She clenches her teeth, reaching for her phone and scrolling up to double-check through the phone recordings from civilians who had been on place because *really*.

She grabs her red pen and circles her note three times with a thick arrow down towards it before writing **IDIOT** in large letters and throwing it aside.

She mutes her headphones with a tap to let Mina know she’s off it before shoving one ear free with her shoulder.

“Why are you even responsible for this shit?” she demands of Endeavour who is reading through his own piles of reports. “This one isn’t even anywhere near of being connected to your agency.” She waves her paper. “Also, what the fuck is wrong with Heroes because this one claims that he did nothing wrong but there are at least nine fucking recordings of him toppling a whole fucking building because he can’t fucking *aim*.”

“A favour.” He doesn’t even look at her and Katsuki twitches, slowly placing it down and grumbling beneath her breath as she grabbed for a second one. “Are you checking recordings with all of them?”

“What about it?” Katsuki asks grumpily as she eyes the Hero name, date and place before looking it up on her phone.

“Most wouldn’t bother.” There’s zero approval or disapproval behind the words, just a factual statement.

She gives him a flat look over the paper supported against her knees,

biting down on the lid of her red pen and yanking it out as she kept his gaze.

“That’s fucking lazy.” She scrubs the red pen over the entire first block of letters before trading it for a pencil and beginning a long sharp note on the marginal with just a tad more aggressiveness than the paper deserved.

“That will be going back to the Hero in question.”

“Good,” Katsuki mutters savagely. “Maybe they’ll fucking learn something.”

-

“What do you make of this?”

Katsuki grasps for the paper without looking, frowning as she scanned through it once, and then a second time slower after noting the Hero name in question.

“Her writing changed,” she says finally, glancing up at Endeavour. “It’s subtle but that’s not written by her.” She shoves the paper towards him but he makes no move to take it, one finger pressed to his ear to indicate he was listening to someone else entirely.

Katsuki blows out a breath through her nose and contemplates dropping it to the floor when he reaches out and grabs it from her before holding out an envelope.

“Bring that to Hawks office.”

Katsuki eyes it. “So, what, I’m an errand girl now?”

“You do whatever I demand of you,” Endeavour says and her mouth curls but she reaches out and snatches it from his hand.

-

Hawks office isn’t far from Endeavour’s and had Katsuki known she’d be running errands she would have brought her fucking bike. But instead she ends up walking because Endeavour had nut no time limit on it and, frankly, being out and about was far better than being stuck in that office.

It’s still a shorter trip than she’d preferred and some thirty minutes later she’s flashing her card at the entrance to a grey building with

yellow and black security-like decoration out front.

Unlike Endeavour's ridiculously tall building Hawks does a reasonable attempt at blending into the buildings around it.

It's... not what she'd expected. Somehow.

At least Hawks could just throw himself through the closest window and be on the scene reasonably fast but Endeavour's many stairs is a fucking hindrance. Out of all the Heroes she thinks that Hawks would have had a reason for dominating a top floor in some high-as-shit building.

Her boots are quiet against the floor as she steps onto the right floor and finds herself led to an office door where the man gives a knock before excusing himself.

"Come in!"

Katsuki's mouth curls but she opens it up, file tucked beneath her arm, and her eyes immediately searching out the spread of red wings of the Hero perched on his desk, one leg folded and a paper resting on top of it.

His eyes are sharp and hawk-like behind the visor and there's teeth in his smile.

"Well, look who it is!" He shoves the paper off his knee and it slides off the desk and onto the floor as he drops his boots off the edge and leans back on his arms. "Endeavour finally let you out of his office, huh?"

"Something like that," Katsuki mutters, eying him.

She vaguely remember him, knows he'd seen her when she'd completely lost track of who she is now as opposed to what the woman was before she died. But he doesn't look at her as if she'd something odd even if the intensity of his eyes are somewhat off-putting as he studies her.

He's got the upper hand and she doesn't like it. She'd done her research on Hawks, knows what he's capable of, but there's a strange lack of depth to most of the information around him. As if his personality just didn't invite people to look any deeper.

"You look better than you did last time I saw you," he hums, patting

the desk beside him.

She gives him a flat look but does kick the door shut behind her and approaches to halt just out of grabbing distance of him.

His eyes gleams.

“I don’t believe we’ve been formally introduced but you can just call me Hawks, I know you have an aversion to names.” *Do you now?* Katsuki thinks but does not say, eyeing him suspiciously. “I work close with Endeavour so you’ll probably be seeing a lot of me.” He leans forward, resting his elbows on his knees, hands balling up beneath his chin. “I’m sure we’ll be thick as thieves before you know it!”

-

Hawks is fucking obnoxious, Katsuki decides, but for all that he annoys her there’s something about him that makes her severely wary in a way that she can’t rationalize.

Maybe it’s just the way he talks to her – as if they’re *friends*, as if he knows something she doesn’t, as if he’s-

Or I’m just fucking paranoid and he’s an obnoxious bastard.

His expression is open, he’s quick to smile, and his body language is relaxed, gesturing as he talks, ignoring the file she’d tried to shove into his hands five times before she gives up and chucks it at him.

“Fine, fine!” The heels of his boots clacks obnoxiously against the wood of the desk as he pries it open with a hum, thumbing up a single paper.

His head tilts, definitively amused, and Katsuki doesn’t trust it. “Look at that!” He peers at her over the paper that bends to hide his mouth. “Endeavour will be *busy* so you have the honour of hanging around here for the rest of the day.”

His heels hits the wood of his desk and Katsuki twitches at the sound, teeth working together before she forces her jaw to relax.

“Wonderful,” she says flatly.

“You need to work on your enthusiasm or you’re going to become just as much as a grump as Endeavour,” Hawks comments with a grin and Katsuki does not appreciate the comparison one inch. “But maybe

that's part of your charm." He winks at her before pushing off his desk with a ruffle of his wings as they settled behind him. "No use wasting the day away – how about you and I do something fun, hm?"

-

Katsuki stares dubiously down at the enormous cup with bright pink lettering slanting obnoxiously on the side of it.

Hawks is sipping at the straw of his own cup, eyes idly wandering, a hand rising to wave back at a civilian when he caught them whispering or pointing.

"It's good," he tells her and Katsuki shifts under the sudden sharp attention of his gaze. "I'll cut off my left hand if you don't like it." He frames said wrist with leather gloved fingers and gives his fingers a little teasing wiggle.

She blows out a breath but takes a sip when he keeps staring expectantly at her and blinks when it's the sugary disaster she'd been expecting but rather something lemony with just enough sweetness to smooth out the acidic sting.

She hums, swallowing several mouthfuls before rolling her eyes as the smug look of the other.

"Not bad," she admits grudgingly.

"*It's not bad* she says." He presses a hand against his heart. "It's the lovely nectar of the tea gods."

"It's lemonade not fucking *tea*."

"That's not what the sign said." Hawks points back to the store, far behind them, and Katsuki follows it with her gaze before snorting.

"Maybe you should be called Hawkeye instead if you can read it all the way from here," she says dryly.

Hawkeye had been her favourite hero growing up – the first and only deaf hero she'd been aware of inside the comic universe. She'd bought every issue with him and was the only one she consistently read and reread again other than Deadpool.

Deadpool hadn't made an impression on her until she read the issue where he and Hawkeye teamed up and the infamous merc-with-a-

mouth had gone out of his way to both roll up his mask to allow lip reading while also signing.

She'd grown a bit of a soft spot for him after that.

Katsuki misses those comics – life had been good when Heroes had been nothing but drawn characters doing ridiculous things for the better of the world.

At least there's no fucking aliens, Katsuki thinks roughly, taking another sip of her drink.

Hawks makes a show of squinting and then shrugging. "I wish. I may have better eyesight than most but everything has its limits and those bright colours do blend together."

Everything about the place had been bright – the colours on the boards outlined in at least three more colours, everything sharp and dramatic, bubbly in its intensity.

She'd gotten a headache from just existing near it and had refused to take a step inside.

"Hawkeye is a good name though," he muses. "But I like Hawks – it's short and snappy."

Katsuki grunts noncommittally.

"So, what's the story behind yours?"

She glances at him but there's honest curiosity in his gaze, as if he actually *wanted* to know and wasn't just asking to keep the conversation going.

"s as good as any, isn't it?" Katsuki flexes her fingers, lips drawing back to flash sharp teeth. "And I like the way it rolls off my tongue."

Ground Zero – the part of the earth's surface closest to the detonation. And as the one responsible for detonations more times than *not*, well, Katsuki can't find it anything but fitting.

Dabi had been the one to suggest it and it's not like she had anything better. The boy had idolized names like *King Explosion Murder* and she's just - *not*.

"It's too long." Hawks sips obnoxiously on his drink, looking more like a teenager than whatever the Number Two Hero was supposed to be.

"I think I'll just call you Zero."

"Zero?" Katsuki repeats, unimpressed.

"I can't go around shouting *Ground* can I. One is clearly the better option." His eyes gleams and for all that it should annoy her she finds herself snorting because he's not *wrong*. "See! You agree." He turns, walking backwards, the wind ruffling the red feathers of his wings and Katsuki thinks that, out of all the physical quirks out there, he'd certainly lucked out.

Humans had always dreamt of flying and she wonders what it's like to be one of the few capable of such a feat.

Wonders what it's like to stretch wings high out above them and look down at the world.

To be completely and utterly *free*.

"Do you want to touch them?" Katsuki jerks, realizing she'd been caught staring as one wing lifts up with a little teasing wiggle. "They're soft," he entices.

"I do *not*."

"Aww, don't be embarrassed." Hawks grins at her, both wings stretching out behind him and Katsuki can't help the way her eyes follows the span of them, caught by the way the sun catches and lights them up. "I know they're hard to resist."

She bares her teeth. "I'm not *petting* you."

"Just a small touch?" Hawks teases, stretching one wing towards her, and Katsuki jerks back with a growl that makes him pause, head tilting as he considers her with sharp eyes. "No? Well. The offer stands if you change your mind." He tucks both wings back with a roll of his shoulders before glancing to the side, steps halting. "Oh, look at that, a civilian in trouble!"

Katsuki follows his gaze and then gives him a long unimpressed look.

But Hawks is already strolling towards the tree and the two kids beneath it and she huffs, dragging her feet after him.

-

"There." Gloved hands pokes at her until she's standing in the right

place, eyebrow twitching as he measures the distance before nodding. "Alright, be still."

"Can't you just *fly*?" Katsuki grumbles as a foot is planted on her hip, hand curling around her shoulder, and her muscles bunches uncomfortably but she remains in place as he hoists himself up.

She growls when one hand plants on top of her head, pushing her hair forward and into her eyes as he pushed up further, one booted foot finding her shoulder and she's sure they look absolutely fucking *ridiculous*.

Hawks doesn't seem an inch concerned though, wobbling a bit before she huffs and reaches up to steady him.

"That wouldn't be nearly as fun thought, would it?" He pushes off her hip and Katsuki grasps at his other foot as it comes down, both his hands landing on top of her head as he crouches like a demented bird on top of her.

She stares long-suffering at the tree, ignoring the kids watching them as if they were the most fascinating happening.

It doesn't take Hawks long to find his balance, and Katsuki strongly suspects it's mostly for show as the first hesitant titter comes from the kid that had been crying just moments before, small fists wiping at tear stained cheeks.

Hawks straightens out and Katsuki holds firm, noting absently that he was lighter than she'd expected considering they were the same height, their build not that different. He's slimmer than her but even with the extra weight of the wings he weighs less than her and she finds herself wondering if his bones, like birds, were hollowed out to allow him to move quickly in the air.

It's not like he's *light* exactly, but it's still notable, especially as his wings spread out behind him as he made a show of pressing up to reach the branch the cat had gotten stuck on.

"Careful, mister!" One of the children calls when Hawks make a show of wobbling despite the fact that she had a good hold on him.

Katsuki angles up and meets amused eyes with flat, unimpressed ones.

"Don't worry!" Hawks *miraculously* catches his balance, stretching out to his full height. "I've got this!"

She sincerely doubts it and the cat doesn't look very impressed where it crouches amidst the branches, pupils pinpricks inside the yellow of its iris as Hawks nudged at her neck with his heel to make her shift closer.

"Come here, kitten." Hawks voice is steady, sure, fingers reaching as he cooed softly.

The fur on its back fluffs up, tail straight and tense.

Katsuki notes wryly that it's probably lucky that he has a pair of leather gloves on as sharp white teeth flashes before sinking deep.

Chapter End Notes

Me, sliding in way late with an update: sup mah dudes?

Look, I know it might not seem like a lot is happening this chapter but establishing characters are important and Hawks it - Hawks. Gotta get things rolling. And Hero work isn't all - blast and explosions, sometimes it's obnoxiously bright drinks and saving cats from trees.

And paperwork.

And I do not think for a second that Katsuki would just be entrusted with the kind of information that Endeavour, undoubtedly, handles as the Number One Hero.

I know I'm way behind on responding and I'm sorry for that - life has been a bit messy but I'm working on it.

Much love to all of you - your support means the world and makes my days all the brighter.

I'm artsy-death on tumblr if you're around there and this has been chapter 58 of In The End.

I hope you enjoyed!

Evergreen Envy

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

"Ouch."

Katsuki levels the Hero with an unimpressed look but Hawks grins, unrepentant, legs swinging as she dragged the last kitten band-aid in place, leaving him to admire her handiwork.

"You're good at that."

"Sure," Katsuki snorts. "Takes real skill to make sure the white cotton is on top of the bleeding and not anywhere fucking else." Although, admittedly, Himiko struck her as the kind of person who'd make an impressive mess out of such a simple thing solely because she *could*.

Hawks wiggles his fingers experimentally and then slides his glove back in place over it.

There's a scratch on his jaw, tiny really, and it had long since stopped bleeding, but he angles it up towards her and gives her a woeful look that looks absolutely ridiculous.

"No," she says flatly.

"But I need all my wounds taken care of!" He shuffles closer to the edge, expression innocent. "You wouldn't like me to be impaired if we're called out to a scene, would you?"

Katsuki stuffs the band-aids back into her pouch with a meaningful look and he laughs.

"Alright, alright, I can take a hint." He draws his legs up, folding up on the bench, hands wrapping around his ankles.

It's nearing late afternoon and the glow of the sun is orange, almost pink in places, and Hawks looks absolutely content to remain in place where he is, his sharp gaze prickling as he studies her and she pulls her lips back, flashing teeth.

"You're very different from last time," Hawks says after a long moment. "I'd heard but it's still... surprising."

“Because you saw me freak out?” Katsuki shoves her hands into her pockets, not quite interested in the conversation, but she has a feeling Hawks isn’t going to let this one go until he’s said whatever the he wanted to say.

“There’s that of course,” Hawks agrees, tone light. “I think that, if anything, really sold me on the whole ‘being two people’ thing because you’re nothing like her.”

It stings, oddly, and Katsuki works her jaw behind the collar of her jacket, anger coiling hot beneath her skin.

“I don’t think it’s a bad thing.” She meets his gaze with a furrow of her brow, wary, but his eyes are bright and sharp behind the visor and there’s nothing about him that says he’s mocking her. “You know who you remind me of?” he wonders, shifting to press a knuckle below his chin as he leant an elbow against his knee.

“Do I care?” Katsuki asks dryly when his silence stretches expectantly. “There are billions of people in the world, I’m certain to have a lot of common with a fuck ton of them.”

Hawks’s smile only grows and she doesn’t like it.

“Fair,” he agrees, shifting and pushing off the bench, *finally*, only to have Katsuki tense up as he stepped up to her, a single finger poking at the middle of the bright orange X on her chest. “But it’s not every day I meet someone who remind me of Endeavour.”

Hawks wings shifts on his back and her eyes tracks the motion.

“You’re far more afraid than he’ll ever be though.”

It takes her a second for the words to register but when they do she growls low.

Hawks regards her with amusement. “I’m not wrong, am I?” He folds his hands at the back of his head, looking relaxed. “Most people who meet me wants to touch my wings. But you? You’re doing everything to avoid them.” He spans his wings wide behind him and Katsuki tenses, watching him. “It’s not quite what I’m used to.”

He turns one idly, letting the sun shine and brighten the red in them even further.

“Her world didn’t have quirks,” Katsuki says sourly. “They can be

however pretty they want but it doesn't make them any less dangerous."

She'd read up on Hawks – she *knows* what those wings are capable of and she'd be a fucking idiot if she ignored that. He's the Number Two Hero for a *reason* – the youngest to reach such a rank *ever* and she's not foolish enough to ignore what exactly that means in a world where danger hides in all shapes and forms.

Hawks blinks, looking momentarily surprised before it disappeared behind a façade of levity. "Now *that* is something I'm not used to hearing," he says with a cock of his head, wings folding back. "Afraid of little 'ol me?"

"Don't flatter yourself." Katsuki slowly unwires. "Everyone is fucking dangerous, you're not special."

"*Everyone?*" Hawks gaze is keen. "You did seem awfully cosy with those Villains of yours. Are *they* special?"

"None of your business." Katsuki's fingers curls against her thighs inside her pockets. "I'm not here for you indulge in your fucking *curiosity*, Hawks. What's between me and them is just fucking *that*-between us. Not you. Not the other Heroes. Fucking *no-one*."

"For now." Hawks' mouth curls up. "You don't think it's going to stay that way, do you? You're smart, you know they're going to press the issue sooner or later."

"So what?" She glowers at him. "I'm supposed to just yack it up to *you?*"

He holds up his hands, giving them a small wave of surrender.

"I'm just sayin'," he says innocently. "He's a curious one though, isn't he?" Hawks muses, head tilting. "That *Dabi*, was it?" Katsuki regards him warily. "It's not every day someone with a fire quirk pops up, it's quite the rare quirk. And such a lovely shade of blue too."

Katsuki can't decide if he's serious or not – if the admiration, or perhaps curiosity, in his voice is anything but something that's supposed to rankle her.

"I'm not your enemy." Hawks stands opposite her, twenty-two-years old, the same age Amélie had been when she died, eight years younger than her but also six years older.

“No you’re not.” Her lips draws back. “Because you’re not my fucking *anything*.”

“You say that as if we didn’t have a lovely day together!” His hand shoots out against the pole near him, the other coming up to press against his heart. “You wound me so!”

-

Katsuki drags the door shut with a growl, ignoring the glance from Endeavour as she sunk deep into the fancy leather seats of his car with a scowl out the window.

She’d been stuck with Hawks for another whole fucking hour and if she had any doubt about his ability to wiggle beneath her skin like a particularly fiendish thing it had well and thoroughly been blown away.

The car rumbles to life with a low noise as they roll out of the parking lot and Katsuki resists the urge to press her forehead against the glass and just... close her fucking eyes.

Because she doesn’t trust Endeavour and her neck is prickling at being in the same car as him, trapped for all intent and purpose for all that it wasn’t the first or last time he’d be driving her.

They’re half-way home when she swears, straightening up.

“We need to pick up food.”

“There is food at home.”

“*In the freezer*,” Katsuki informs the man as she slumps back down. “Fuyumi said to pick something up, she’s out.”

He makes a low rumbling noise that might have been a hum of acknowledgement, Katsuki isn’t entirely sure until they make a left turn some five minutes later, turning down familiar streets to one of the smaller shopping malls.

-

There’s something about the great Endeavour rolling around a shopping cart that is off to her in a way she can’t explain. He’s in civilian clothes, a simple button-up in red and slacks, a cap pulled low to shadow his face. He’s broad and large enough that in her world he

would have drawn looks but here, among quirks, he melts right in without fire licking over his face and a constant domineering aura.

Katsuki supposes it's hard to feel domineering when you're staring down a can of beans but she's no expert.

He's also a *health nut* she decides, approximately two minutes into their shopping, as he side-eyes the relatively healthy cereal choice and swaps it for something that is all health and no taste beyond cardboard.

She snags the package back, giving it a twirl before resting it on her shoulder as she followed, mentally sorting through the list Fuyumi had texted her and picking two spices off the rack as they ambled past it.

"Want anything in particular?" Katsuki wonders idly when they reach the meat isle, gaze picking through the different sorts, contemplating what to do with it.

"Anything is fine."

"Helpful," she mutters, reaching to snag some ribs, figuring she could make an easy meal out of it along with some potato salad.

She picks up the fish Fuyumi had requested, a decent sorting of vegetables, more seaweed and tofu for miso and some dark chocolate and a package of snacks because she *really* deserves it.

"Dessert?" she asks absently, mostly out of habit, but there's silence stretching behind her and she pauses to glance over her shoulder to spot Endeavour at the flower section, cart and all.

"Old man?" She frowns but ultimately decides that it isn't her business and goes off to hunt for something to complete dinner with because she's starving.

Dessert and Endeavour's healthy habits eventually has her at the mochi section, a part of her wondering why she was bothering to cater to his taste at all, another knowing that they weren't really *that* fucking different when it came down to their food choices.

Katsuki likes an unhealthy snack, and she'll have a burger or a pizza, but at the end of the day there's still a plastic bag of lemons in the cart and a sensible amount of roots and vegetables to weigh it out.

Katsuki likes mochi. It's a healthy dessert. Really, sometimes it doesn't have to be more complicated than that.

She picks two daifuku, two kusa mochi and finally snags along a kuzumochi which is *really* a summer dessert, if anything, but the wind had settled to leave a relatively warm autumn evening and it's *right there* with a bright red bargain sticker.

She stacks the individual packages into a paper bag after scanning the stickers and tucks it beneath her arm as she sidles up beside Endeavour. He has a suspiciously wrapped package leaning in the cart but Katsuki makes no comment as she hands the scanner over.

She's distracted by a familiar comic as they're waiting in line to have their scanner checked and she leans down to pick it up, noting the number in the corner and realizing with something odd coiling through her that she she's three issues behind.

"Sir, would you like to include your son's comic?"

Her brain takes a moment to connect the words and the rumbled yes of Endeavour and her head snaps up in time to see the cashier write something on his computer before scanning it and Endeavour is already holding out his card to pay before another word can be said.

The comic crinkles before she catches herself and hesitantly draws it against her chest as Endeavour began moving again, something rolling inside of her.

"The less attention the better," Endeavour says shortly as they step out into the fresh air and Katsuki-

"I'm blonde," she says a bit lamely, not quite sure where to place the feeling inside of her as her thumb drags over the spine of the comic. "You didn't need to buy it."

"It's hardly more than pocket change, which you should be well aware." It's not amusement per say but something close enough that Katsuki snorts, shoulders relaxing an inch. "And my wife has white hair, blonde wouldn't have been so odd."

Katsuki wrinkles her nose. "I'm not your child."

"No," Endeavour agrees. "You are not. But I'm not going to bother arguing semantics with civilians." He glances at her, eyes turquoise, perhaps a shade darker than Dabi's under the brim of his hat. "You are

a child as far as this world is concerned, you will never be perceived as anything but the age you appear.”

“I know that.” Katsuki scowls at him, at nothing in particular, because it’s a loathsome reality to swallow even as she tastes the reality of it daily.

“Then use it.” She blinks at him. “You’re clever and older than you appear – people will underestimate you and that leaves you at an advantage.” He tilts his head to the store. “Play to it, don’t let it rule you.”

It’s not the first time Endeavour has called her clever, and perhaps she is in the sense that she’s thirty at sixteen.

There’s some sort of irony to the Heroes who’d called her to Principal Nedzu’s office having the exact same thought – that her physical appearance was an advantage and something to be used to keep Endeavour in the position he’s in.

Katsuki feels the disadvantages more than the advantages in the searching question from Detective Tsukauchi in regards to the marks left on her neck from Dabi, a knowledge that she will never be what she knows herself to be and the world judging accordingly.

The trunk to the car pops open and Katsuki reaches automatically to help him load up, well familiar with assisting both Masaki and Mitsuki in such simple things and it-

And she still feels a bit like an idiot, with the note she’d finally cobbled together with a *sorry* and *I screwed up* and *please call me Touya*. It had been lacking, bare of things she wanted to say but had no way to put into words in a way that didn’t make her want to claw her skin off for leaving herself vulnerable. Open. Fucking *exposed*.

You can’t trust them. They’re not on your side anymore. Careful with what you say-

It’s familiar worries crowding together, overwhelming and gnawing and Katsuki *tries* but she also ends up burning more than one paper because even the thought of it *existing* makes her paranoia skyrocket.

Words, in person, are hard too, but easier, even as niggling thoughts of *bugs*, *recording devices*, *cameras* crowd at her when she closes her eyes in Best Jeanist’s apartment.

Katsuki is far from perfect and she can only do so much with her mind wired the way it is. Even in pushing limits. Identifying, compartmentalizing, making an attempt at trying to understand what emotions and feelings are well-founded and what isn't-

It's fucking exhausting. She's not a *robot* and she can't get herself to care every single fucking moment of the day either.

It's just not who she is.

And if she can't be Katsuki then who the fuck even *is she*?

-

"We're taking a detour before going home."

Katsuki, who had been contemplating the pros and cons of her paranoia versus a nap, grunts noncommittally.

"You'll remain in the car." The hospital approaches in the distance and Katsuki eyes the large white building as they turn towards the underground parking area.

"I'll behave," she huffs.

"Hm."

-

Katsuki is behaving. Sorta.

Endeavour had taken the wrapped package and disappeared up the stairs and some ten minutes later she'd traded the front seat in favour of popping the trunk open and curl up there because *air*.

And also, it's just a generally a good place to perch and it left her feeling less claustrophobic as the minutes kept stretching.

The parking area is dimly lit by lamps far up in the ceiling, cars in different colours and sizes spread around, the occasional person coming and going. Katsuki has one leg stretched out, the other pulled up to rest her phone against as she idly browsed through a Hero forum discussing All Might with a fanatic sort of tone.

How the man had a personal life at all was entirely beyond her.

It is curious that even with the man reduced to a shadow of what he'd

been those are not the pics being posted. The majority is still of him all buffed up, smile on his face and blue eyes glowing.

This is the All Might the world loves and adores and heralds still.

It's... a bit. Katsuki can't quite place the feeling.

She might disagree with All Might, vehemently, but he'd paid the ultimate price at the cost of his health and body and the world wanted nothing to do with the reality of it.

She shouldn't care but All Might is too much of this world for her to ignore it.

"Hey – you got a minute?"

Katsuki's shoulders wires tight, head lifting to find a non-descript business man some four steps away from her.

Where the fuck did you come from? Katsuki clicks her phone off but makes no move to put it away as she takes in the dark hair, scruffy cheeks, a hollowed sort of pinch to his cheeks and a twitch to his fingers as he stares at her.

"No," she says finally.

"Don't be like that." He takes a step towards her and Katsuki narrows her eyes. "I just have a question." He lifts both hands in front of him, giving a downright pathetic little wave. "Won't take more than a minute of your time."

His teeth gleams with his smile but there's nothing about it that's *right* and Katsuki darts a glance to her phone to check how much time had passed since Endeavour left.

When she looks back up he's one step closer, eyes intent on her, and *oh for fuck's sake*.

"I'm not interested," she bites out. "Kindly fuck off."

"Such bad language," he tsk's, hands lowering, still smiling. "Is that really appropriate for a *Hero*?"

"I can do much worse," she assures him, mouth curling. "*Leave*."

"No. I don't think I will." He remains loose limbed and relaxed where he stands. "I'm going to stay right here until you answer my question."

Katsuki's hand clenches around her phone before slowly relaxing as she snorts.

"If you think you have any claim on my time you're fucking delusional."

"Then I'll just stay here then." His eyes doesn't leave her for a second. "Until Endeavour returns."

"Or you can just move your fucking feet and get out of here and save us both the time," Katsuki mutters, leaning back and flicking her gaze up and down his body before lifting a brow. "Let me guess, you have some imagined slight to pick with me?"

"Just a question," he says, mouth stretching further up. "And then I'll be out of your hair."

"Somehow I doubt that," she breathes. "One question?"

"One question." He holds up a single finger, ticking it to the side with a tilt of his head.

"Spit it out then," she sighs, quite ready to have the situation over and done with.

"What was it like?"

"Was *what* like?" Katsuki asks flatly, entirely unimpressed because *give someone and inch and they'll take a fucking mile-*

"Sleeping with Endeavour."

Katsuki stares at him.

"Are you accusing Endeavour of seeking sexual gratification in a sixteen-year-old?" she asks finally, a curl of amusement unfurling inside of her because it was clearly meant to be a dig at her character but *fucking really*. "Because I'm quite sure that's the sort of slanderous thing he won't be too impressed about."

"Why else would he be interested in someone like *you*?" His fingers twitches and there's a stiffness to the smile that hadn't been there a second before. "If you're not sleeping with him you're doing *something* because it's not like him. I've followed Endeavour's exploits for years—"

“Sounds like you need a new hobby.”

“- And not *once* has he shown an interest in having someone working beneath him but then *you* got kidnapped and suddenly he’s speaking up about *guiding the youth*.” Katsuki has the feeling this hasn’t a thing to do with her, really, but rather some imagined slight from Endeavour in the way his hand gestures out a tad too sharply, his cool thrown off.

“So sleeping with him was your first guess, me having some sort of hold on this world’s Number One Hero the second.” Katsuki presses a finger to her lips as they curl back, rolling her neck to look directly at him. “Out of curiosity who do you think tops in this imaginary scenario of yours?” Her smile isn’t nice. “Do you imagine him all hot and heavy beneath m-“

“Don’t-“ Katsuki is fairly certain she isn’t imagining his shirt fucking *moving*. “Talk about him like that!” The man’s chest heaves. “You’ve done something. You’re- you’re manipulating him or- something and I won’t stand for it!” His hand gestures sharply out, the sleeve rippling with movement, and she slips her phone into her pocket. “He’s- Endeavour would *never*-“

“You’re the one who brought it up.” Katsuki shifts, muscles coiling carefully even as she feigns ease as she props her chin on her knuckles, elbow against her thigh. “And I mean, really, there’s no shame in bottoming-“

“Shut up!”

“-I bet he’d take it like a fucking champ-“

“SHUT UP!”

A vine- green and broad, tapering towards the tip, lashes out towards her but Katsuki is already hitting the ground in a roll, hearing the sound of paper bags tearing and then glass shattering as she exploded the soles of her sneakers to get her out of the path of a second one in a twist.

She lands on the tip of her toes, braced on her hands before she goes flat as a vine, much thicker and heavier, tears through the air in a whip of motion to slam hard against a car that crunches with a flattening of metal.

Amusement coils alongside the anticipation crawling thick through

her, quickening her heart beat as she pushes up, keeping a careful eye on the other as his shirt burst with vines stretching thick out of the skin on his back to surround him as he glowers at her.

“I’m gonna go out on a limb here,” Katsuki drawls as she straightens up, flexing her fingers. “And guess that you wanted to work with Endeavour but he denied you the spot. And now you’re just feeling a *little bit* jealous that I’ve gotten what you’ve always wanted.” More vines coils out, wrapping thick around him. “How *embarrassing*.”

“I’m gonna prove I’m better,” he promises her. “I’ll show him how wrong he was to pick *you* when he could have had *me*.”

Katsuki flicks her fingers up, popping a small explosion with a cock of her head.

"I'm sure he'll be ecstatic."

Chapter End Notes

Because not all people are going to be too impressed by someone of Endeavour's status picking a sixteen-year-old to work with him.

I don't have too much to say about this chapter - Hawks is being... Hawks. Endeavour is being domestic because even the Number One Hero needs to eat and the Todoroki family is a mess as usual.

I've almost caught-up with your comments and I can't even begin to describe how amazing it is to read them and chat with you guys. It just... wonderful.

My dog is peering up at me with hopeful eyes which means it's time for his walk so on that-

Thank you all for being amazing. This has been chapter 59 of In The End and I'm around tumblr as artsy-death if you wanna say hi there.

I hope you enjoyed!

Ice Cold Toffee

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

“Would you fucking stop-“ She ducks. “Throwing cars!” She’s forced to go low, the car colliding with a large crunch against the wall behind her as she twisted with the motion, palms hitting the floor before she pushed up to vault onto the hood of a red fancy car with a brief wobble.

Vines whip towards her but Katsuki is already moving, one car roof after the other as alarms blares around her, glass getting crushed as the man did his desperate best to swing long out-of-control limbs after her.

Whatever he did for a living it did not involve fighting but *fucking hell* it made him absolutely unpredictable to deal with and he had just enough skill to make an absolute fucking bother out of himself.

She hits the ground between two cars seconds before vines goes through the front windows of the one that had been in front of her, coiling and hauling it up before throwing it back to join the steadily growing pile blocking the entrances.

She sincerely hopes no-one is making her pay for any of this.

She’s not even in her Hero get-up.

“I’m doing the world a favour!” The vines on his body pulses and grows, some as thick as her legs, others doing a decent impression of Endeavour’s broad shoulders where they piled around him in a thick protective shield.

“You’re doing the world fucking *nothing*,” Katsuki hollers back, because she’s a bit of an asshole, and nearly gets brained by a car door for her troubles as she dives behind one of the concrete pillars.

There are voices ringing out in the speakers, code *reds* and *black*, and Endeavour has to fucking know what’s going but the man had made good on cramming cars together at all entrances and she hadn’t caught it until it was too late.

Not like there was much she could have done about it. *She* certainly

didn't have the muscles to throw cars around and the morality of bringing a fight *into* the damn hospital was on the scale of *fuck no* and fucking staying there.

So far Katsuki is busy not taking the fight to the two kids who had been left in the car on the right side of the garage and that's only because she'd passed it by on chance to find a pair of far too wide eyes staring back at her.

"What do you have that I don't!?"

A motorcycle comes careening over the floor in show of sparkles and scraping metal that rings loud and her sneakers presses down against it, using the momentum to go high over the large vine that thrown it only to collide with a second one, carried up and nearly crushes against the ceiling before she twisted to slide off it.

Concrete rains down against them both but Katsuki's eyes are on the face barely visible among the vines as she slams her palm out, kicking off a large explosion with a deafening *bang!*

He howls, vines twisting up and around her, one wrapping around her waist and twisting her left before throwing her with a sharp crack in the opposite direction.

She hits the ground hard, her attempt to turn having her shoulder take the brunt with a *crack* as her other arm shot out, fingers digging into slow her down as she caught the turn of her body with her knees, feeling them scrape bloody but hardly stopping to care beyond that as she pushes up.

"I don't know, man," she says, spitting out some blood with a grimace as she gave herself a shake, straightening out. "Maybe it's because he has some fucking *standards*."

"You were *kidnapped*." He glowers at her. "Because of *you* All Might lost his powers! You did nothing that should have drawn his attention!"

I'm sure Endeavour's reflection disagrees, Katsuki thinks as she wipes blood from a scrape at her cheek against her shoulder.

"Unlike you?" she challenges. "I'm sure he's going to be *real* impressed that you decided to pick a fight in a hospital parking lot." She presses her palm down against her shoulder before slamming it up against the car beside her, using the weight of her body to snap it back into place.

She rolls it and - decent, she decides.

“You’re never outside.” The vines coils around him. “At least there’s no one here, unlike the mall.”

“*Yeah*, that one might have been a bad pick.” Katsuki cocks her head. “How long have you been following me anyway? Because you’re having me mildly concerned about potential stalkers.”

As in: I’m never fucking sleeping again because what the fuck man.

“I wanted to know what made you so different.” He tracks her slowly as she moves, feet bare against the ground. “I wanted to understand *why*. I did everything right! I graduated top of my class but Endeavour – he looked at me as if I was nothing more than dirt beneath his shoe when I turned up at his office!”

Katsuki snorts. “Gutsy, turning up at the office of a Pro-Hero to demand a spot. Most would, you know, wait for an actual invitation or go the good ol’ route of applying when there’s an opening.”

There was a reason why Heroes were the ones to scout of new hires – why you couldn’t just *turn-up*. Because people tended to pick all sorts of grudges with Heroes and it added some security to being the one to make the first move.

And few wanted to odd out to work with some fanatical *fan*.

Aizawa had been damn quick to push the matter of networking on them. The Sports Festival that set up invitations for Internships-

It was at the very core of the Hero Education.

“Endeavour’s Hero Agency never sends out invitations.” Something thick and envious layers thick in his voice. “But *you* – you didn’t even *graduate*.”

“I think you’ve sincerely misunderstood life if you think life is just going to pay you for working hard. People work hard all the fucking time and still end up scrambling. Some don’t do *shit* and still has everything served up on a fucking silver platter.” She gives him a flat look. “I hate to fucking say it but he owed you *shit* because you grabbed the fucking top spot in *school*.”

“Then what was I supposed to *do!*?”

She just barely ducks down beneath the swing of a vine, feeling something strain in her chest with a swallowed cough as she swung around, fingers wrapping around it before kicking off a spark.

The explosion rings loudly in the small space, despite her holding back, and the lamps swing above them as she kicks her foot up and fires off another, chunks of green splattering around them as he stumbled back with a cry, and Katsuki is rather reminded of an octopus in the way they curl towards him in a protective sort of motion.

She huffs, foot touching down against the concrete.

"Found something else do with your fucking life," she grumbles. "There are *thousands* of Heroes out there, I'm sure you could have found *anyone else* to fucking work with."

Vines curls, several of the thick ones dragging against the floor with a scraping noise before they rose heavy through the air.

"I did everything right," he hisses.

"And I did everything wrong, look at us *go*."

Katsuki twists, intent on slamming off another explosion, but before she can do much more than shift a foot back there's a *roar* and fire, red and yellow and *not blue*, crawls over the floor to rise up in a high hot wall in front of her, a hand grasping the back of her collar and yanking her back to a surprised noise as she collided against a hard chest.

An arm wraps around her midriff before she can lash out, pinning her in place, and Katsuki's chest heaves, skin prickling as more and more fire curled in a thick spinning circle around the other.

"I leave you alone for twenty minutes," Endeavour's heavy voice comes far too close and Katsuki looks up at him, skin itching and crawling but something telling her to remain still. "Who is he?"

"Your problem," Katsuki gets out and gets a squeeze for her trouble which her ribs *does not appreciate*. "I'm serious! He's some sort of *fan* of yours and jealous I'm working with you and not him. Apparently he's been fucking stalking me. Us." She shoves at him and his grip eases just an inch. "I've never fucking met him before."

Turquoise dips down to study her briefly, the furious cries coming

from inside the circle going ignored by them both.

“I tried to limit the damage but I was busy trying to keep him from squishing the kids down in the corner.” She hooks a thumb behind her. “And slamming off explosions under a fucking hospital isn’t exactly *ideal*.”

“Hm.” His grip eases. “Get them out of here while I deal with him.”

“Aye, aye,” Katsuki mutters grumpily but she does twist on her heel.

Perhaps it’s stupid to turn her back to an enemy.

But Katsuki knows intimately what Endeavour is capable of and the fucker doesn’t stand a fucking *chance*.

-

It takes just a small explosion to snap the lock on the car and Katsuki finds herself with an inquisitive duo that are *entirely* too fucking impressionable.

“-the way he went swoosh, and then you went all like BANG!”

The dramatic recounting from the eight-year-old in sparkly dress with a toy sword that smacks enthusiastically against her cheeks and chin.

The other is busy carefully covering every inch of her in band-aids and bandages filched from one of the free first aid kits that were liberally crowded around them in the waiting room. Brow wrinkled and cheeks still wet from tears because seeing all the blood on her had been *upsetting*.

Most of it is just scrapes, the worst were her bruised ribs and shoulder that she’d already popped back into place and Katsuki’s clothes were dark to begin with because she’d just grabbed the first available hoodie and jeans that morning.

A band-aid is carefully placed just beneath her eye.

“I want to be a Hero too!” The older girl crows enthusiastically and Katsuki shifts and inch back to avoid having her eye poked out.

“Be careful Niko!” The younger protests with a glower. “You’ll hurt him!”

“Will not!” The older protests immediately. “Right, Hero-san?” Brown

eyes looks up at her.

“Who are you here with?” Katsuki asks long-suffering.

“Oh!” The older perks up, the shift from pouting to bright cheery smile nearly giving her a whiplash. “Uncle brought us today! We were supposed to visit Papa but Yumi got all upset and refused so I had to stay with her.” She places a closed fist over her heart, straightening-up self-importantly. “He didn’t want to leave us but he promised to be right back but then the plant guy just went-“ The sound effects are accompanied by more sword stabbing, thankfully in the opposite direction.

“I wanted to go,” the younger mutters quietly. “But it’s *scary*.”

“Scary?” Katsuki echoes blankly.

“He’s so silent and just lies there.” Small brows wrinkle. “Mama says it was an accident, that a fight happened and he was at the wrong place and-“

“It was the Villain’s fault!” The older spins around. “If it wasn’t for them then Papa wouldn’t have gotten hurt.”

“I know!” A band-aid is slapped on with a bit too much force.

“It can still be scary,” Katsuki says cautiously, supremely uncomfortable as the younger’s eyes started to get suspiciously wet with a little snuffle. “The important thing is that he’s getting help.”

“That’s what Uncle says,” the younger whispers.

“And Mama!” the older enthuses.

Please someone take these fucking children from me, Katsuki thinks, looking up for the hundredth time, but the hospital had been sealed off with heavy doors and only the melted path Endeavour had made had gotten them as far up and away from the fight as they had.

They’re in the mental health ward of the hospital, she knows from the signs, but it’s not one she has been in before.

Even so the white walls and numbered white doors are familiar, even if she hadn’t spent more than a week or two at a time in ones during those first two years.

The kids are chattering away when Katsuki’s eyes darts up, one of the

doors carefully cracking open, and she has a flashback to the mall – to Endeavour’s comment about his *wife having white hair*.

Because the face that peers out is haggard and pale, grey eyes draining her further of colour, somehow, leaving a woman very washed out.

The pale green button-up isn’t much helping her case either.

Katsuki hasn’t seen someone so severely in need of some fucking colour in *years*.

But it’s still – the roundness of her eyes shared with Fuyumi, the colour matched by both daughter and middle son who had also taken after the white hair.

It’s really impossible to mistake her for anyone else and Katsuki straightens up because *this is Dabi’s mother*.

They have the same nose, she thinks as grey eyes finds her, Katsuki’s head cocking as she stills.

“I’m sorry but do you know what is–“

“Problem in the garage parking lot. Endeavour is dealing with it,” Katsuki says, gruffer than she means as the younger leans over to slap a band-aid on her jeans. “Touya Katsuki. You must be Todoroki Rei.”

There’s a small jerk at her name, the woman’s shoulders curling up, and Katsuki watches her keenly.

“I... Yes. Fuyumi mentioned you.” A brief touch of a smile before it faded away like a ghostly thing. “You used to be in Shouto’s class.”

“Yeah.”

“I see.”

The girls have grown suspiciously quiet and Katsuki glances down to find eyes staring at the other woman.

“Who is the pretty lady?” the older demands in interest. “Does she stay here like Papa?”

“It’s... kinda like that,” Katsuki says awkwardly, glancing towards the Endeavour sized hole with the crushed fire alarm discarded on the floor near it.

"I have some snacks in my room if you want some," Rei offers with something more genuine. "My daughter brought me all kinds of toffees."

"Toffees?" both girls echoes in interest.

-

"Thanks," Katsuki mutters as the kids dive into the small pile of homemade candy Rei had brought forth.

"They looked like they needed a distraction," Rei says and her voice is kind, her expression soft as Katsuki glances towards her to see her watching both of the kids. "And so did you. It must have been quiet the harrowing situation but it looks like they took good care of you." There's a touch of humour to her voice that is, unexpected, somehow, and Katsuki blinks.

And then huffs.

"Mostly scrapes."

The other woman hums. "I'm sure your ribs could need a looking at, too."

"Yeah." Katsuki slumps back in the single chair in the room, Rei seated on the bed with her ankles crossed near the floor. "'s not that bad."

"A sentiment I've heard many times before but I've learnt rarely is true when it comes to Heroes." There's a wry sort of lilt to her voice. "My husband in particular can be very stubborn."

Katsuki grunts noncommittally.

"Fuyumi mentioned you've been helping out around the house." There's a note of something that Katsuki can't quite place in her voice. "She also said she's been meeting up with some old classmates. I was quite surprised to hear about it." A brief dip of her lips. "I've been hearing less and less about them during the last year."

"I live there, it's only natural to help out," Katsuki mutters uncomfortably.

Rei hums, a soft sound as the two girls carefully peels the wrapper of a suspiciously bright candy, debating over the possible taste of the

orange and blue swirls, shoulders shoved close and toy sword momentarily abandoned.

“Touya-san-“

“Katsuki is fine,” she interrupts.

Grey eyes shifts towards her, studying her before a chin dips in acknowledgement.

“Katsuki-san then.” Those eyes shifts back to the girls. “I was quite surprised to hear Enji had decided to take someone under his wings, so to say. And even more so for you to be staying in our-“ A pause. “House.” A small curl of her shoulders. “Have you- you must have spoken to my children-“

All of them, Katsuki thinks but does not say.

She still isn't too sure if Dabi remembers this woman positively or negatively. His hatred was firmly focused on Endeavour with a vengeance that wrapped thick and heavy around his heart but his *mom*? Katsuki just doesn't know what kind of role she'd played in the Todoroki household.

What role she still played.

“I see Fuyumi pretty much daily,” Katsuki mutters. “Natsuo I've met twice. He seems like the decent sort.”

“He's quite the gentleman.” And she sounds so *proud*. “Fuyumi- she takes after me a lot but Natsuo, he's always gone his own way.” A pause. “And Shouto?” Rei ventures very carefully and Katsuki slants a look at the odd tone in her voice. “He's... Is he doing well?”

There's something uncomfortably *frail* about Todoroki Rei that odds with the domineering force that is Todoroki Enji. An odd pairing and she thinks *fire* and she thinks *ice* and she thinks of Endeavour's words about Shouto surpassing him.

Quirk marriage had been outlawed but Katsuki isn't so naïve to think it doesn't fucking *happen*.

She thinks that it would be easy to write her off, to paint her as nothing more than a victim, but a part of her still clings to Shouto's scar that isn't a *burn scar*.

And Katsuki knows that violence breeds violence, that hatred can stretch to lash out at even those that aren't responsible for it because if you push and push and push something eventually *snaps*.

But then, she could also have been just as interested in making a perfect Hero as Endeavour. Appearances could be deceiving.

Katsuki reaches up to scratch at her neck before catching herself and letting her hand fall with a huff.

Maybe it's unfair of her, maybe Rei is a good mother that just happened to end up with a shitty husband. Katsuki doesn't fucking *know*.

Did you fail him, too? She wonders as she thinks of Dabi's scarred body and the fire eating him alive from the inside.

"He's doing fine." *If you ignore the fact that he nearly blew me the fuck up a couple of days ago because he can't stand being reminded of your husband.* "He's making friends. Will probably take the top spot now that I'm gone."

Well, he or Mini Might, depends on who shapes up first. Or Ponytail if she stops being so damn hesitant and ditches that damn book of hers-

"I'm glad."

Katsuki grunts, slumping deeper and then regrets it with a wince and straightens up.

"Hey Mister, this tasted *bad*." She eyes the sticky hand shoved out towards her with a toffee that looked like it had taken a dip into a lake of tar, the other half bright sticky red and gnawed as close as small teeth had dared before giving up on it.

"Trash bin is right *there*," Katsuki informs the younger with a small jerk of her head.

"Mama says it's bad to waste food."

"So *eat it*," Katsuki says nonplussed.

A soft laugh. "Why don't you give it to me?" Rei offers, reaching out, palm open. "Liquorice happen to one of my *favourites*."

"Thank you!" The kid doesn't hesitate for a second to shove the sticky candy into Rei's hand before ducking down by her sister again.

Katsuki eyes it doubtfully but Rei makes sure the children aren't watching and then slips it into a bit of a folded napkin and tucks it away.

A small wink and when the younger glances back she makes a show of chewing and *ah*.

Well then.

"Forgive me for asking but – the children, you let them call you Mister but Fuyumi, she uses female pronouns when she talks about you?"

Katsuki blinks and then shrugs. "Didn't bother correcting. 's not like they'll ever see me again after this."

"I wouldn't be so sure about that," Rei tells her and there's a furrow to her brows, fingers smoothing down the fabric of her pants in an absent sort of gesture. "This kind of thing isn't something they'll forget anytime soon. Heroes tend to make an impression."

She contemplates Rei for a moment and then tilts her head down because it's a gentle sort of nudge and Katsuki can take a hint.

And ultimately, she sorta gets it.

"Hey, kids?"

"Yeah?" Both turn attentively towards her, more than one toffee enthusiastically crammed into their mouths and the resemblance to a pair of chipmunks is rather uncanny.

"I'm a Miss not a Mister."

"Oh." The older pouts. "You forgot to say?"

"I did. Was a bit too busy hauling us out of there," Katsuki admits dryly.

A contemplative little tilt, the younger chewing her toffee, eyes shifting between them with sticky paws pressed against her mouth.

"Miss, then," the older says decisively.

"Touya is fine," Katsuki mutters but the two are already back at the candy.

"It's a beautiful name. Touya." It's a quiet sort of thing. "The kanji-"

“Peach tree.” Because she’d thought about it but ultimately she liked the irony of being associated with peach trees, considering how much she *did not enjoy them*.

The kanji used for Todoroki Touya had been *light arrow*.

She is certainly not associating herself with that kind of name. Peach tree worked just fine for her.

"It suits you," the other woman tells her and Katsuki decides that there's something rather odd about being told such a thing when Rei was under the impression of her oldest son being well and truly *dead*.

It's too bad for her that Katsuki isn't the sort to care much beyond that.

Chapter End Notes

Look at that, the whole Todoroki family has finally come together.

Sorta.

Katsuki is kinda meeting them all at least so that's... something. I figure we can't deal with the Todoroki family without having all parts here and I feel it was kinda inevitable that Katsuki would stumble across Rei eventually. Though, it could have been during more... favourable times, I suppose.

But that's not really Katsuki's style.

It was also interesting to consider the safety measures a hospital might put in place when people have quirks. Heavy metal walls and sealed off stations strikes me as just the preventive measure that might have been put up to protect patients. But that might just be me.

Anyway, it's 5 am so I'm just gonna go sleep on that because I am dead tired.

Chapter 60 my friends. I'm artsy-death on tumblr if you're around there.

I hope you enjoyed!

Parallels

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Something Katsuki learns: Endeavour doesn't actually stop to visit his wife.

He *does* in the sense that they're in the same building, on the same floor, a single door separating them. But the flowers had never reached the room but instead been left at the nurse station.

This is an observation she makes between leaving Rei's room to the call of *girl* and seeing the same wrapped package at the nurse station as the metal panels shudders before rolling up with the quieting of the alarms that had been ringing constant, if distant, on their floor where Endeavour had spared the time to crush them.

He's waiting for her and she shrugs at his unimpressed look.

Endeavour hardly looks ruffled, which isn't a surprise, and he's accompanied by police who doesn't waste much time herding the two girls away with them to calls of goodbye that Katsuki raises an absent hand to before stuffing it back into her pocket with a slouch.

"We heading back?"

He studies her for a moment longer before turning on his heel and Katsuki snorts before she follows.

-

The ride home is silent.

They're in the back of a police car since Endeavour's had been well and truly ruined, a single bag of groceries having been saved from the wreckage and crammed at her feet.

Endeavour's arms are folded, his head turned away from her.

Katsuki blows out a breath and drags a hand up the side of her face and scrubs it over her brow.

"Old ma-"

“Whatever you have to say can wait until we’re home.”

She eyes the side of him, something wrathful curling through her, something uncomfortable bubbling in her gut that she forces down with a grunt as she slumps deeper into her seat, scowling.

-

“Sit down.”

Katsuki bites down on the inside of her cheek but Endeavour’s eyes are firm and she has no doubt he’ll force her if she doesn’t comply.

It does nothing against the rebellious urge to remain standing anyway.

“Sit.”

Katsuki complies reluctantly, slouching down on the stair of the gazebo and tilting her head up to look at the other with a raised brow.

Endeavour takes a moment longer, staring down at her, arms folded over his broad chest, before he finally deigns to speak to her.

“You could have taken him out.”

“Could have, should have, yadda yadda,” Katsuki mutters grumpily. “I stand by what I said – I’m not taking responsibility for blowing stuff up beneath a fucking *hospital*.”

“And if I hadn’t come?” Endeavour presses.

It’s dark – the stars bright spots in the sky behind him and Katsuki’s skin itches.

“I’d have risked it. Probably.”

“You are not a coward.” Endeavour’s gaze is keen, studying her, perhaps trying to understand but *what* Katsuki doesn’t fucking know. “So why don’t you explain to me just what went through your mind when you allowed him to make a fool out of you.”

“Is that how you view it?” Katsuki asks instead of answering. “Because I, what, didn’t immediately went about my way to blow him up? Some would call that progress.”

“Don’t play daft, girl.”

Katsuki snorts, arms wrapping around her still aching chest. “What do you want me to say?”

“I want you to stop making me question why I brought you on in the first place.” He takes a step towards her. “There’s still a second option if you’re not going to take this seriously.”

“You mean jail?” Katsuki levels him with a flat look. “Let me just celebrate all the choices that brought me to two such *wonderful* options.”

Flames licks momentarily over Endeavour knuckles but they’re gone before Katsuki manages much more than to tense her muscles, the hair on the back of her neck prickling.

“Most would be envious of such a position.” His voice is a low rumble that still carries and demands attention.

“Yeah, that much has been made very clear,” she mutters. “I feel rather violated about the whole thing if I’m being-“

“*Quiet.*”

Katsuki’s mouth snaps shut and her eyes are dark as they meet his.

“You have once chance to explain to me,” he growls. “*One.*”

Katsuki stares at him, her heart pounding in her chest, something ugly and angry and raw crawling up through her to curl into something thick in her throat.

“You wouldn’t-“

Endeavour twists on his heel and Katsuki’s mind blanks between one moment and the next and she stumbles, the world momentarily dipping sideways and would have sent her to her knees if not for the his hand curls around her arm, yanking her upright as she chokes on a wheezing breath.

She doesn’t remember standing up and she can’t get herself to care.

“This world-“ Her voice comes out raw and she loathes it just as much as she loathes the man whose face is suddenly much closer than she wanted it to be.

But the colour of his eyes are all *Dabi* and she latches onto that thought, forcing her mouth to move.

“It *hates me*.”

Endeavour stares at her and she glares back, his hand wrapped tight around her arm with a burning feeling that makes her want to claw it off.

“It made a mockery out of me at the Sports Festival,” she spits out. “And then it has just been one fucking *shit show* with All Might taking some *personal fucking offence* to my very existence, the kidnapping and getting blamed for his fucking downfall as if I had *anything* to fucking do with that!”

The ice in her chest is as heavy and prickling as ever, digging into her as she clamps one hand at his collar in an attempt at establishing some sort of control.

“I can’t be thirty but I’m *sick* of being treated as a child and I’m fucking *tired* of being mistaken for one but I don’t even know what it means to be my age anymore because I haven’t been allowed to be an adult for *eight-goddamn-years*. I’ve lost the only people I’ve been able to rely on and now I’m stuck here with *you* and somehow I’m just supposed to be okay with that!”

Her nails digs into his skin but Endeavour remains still, his face unreadable, and somehow – *somehow* it only makes her hate him all the more.

“You don’t think I’m aware of this world watching my every fucking *move*, huh!?” Katsuki demands with a snarl. “It’s all over the fucking internet – if it’s not one thing it’s the fucking next and if you think that *anyone* would have been happy about me going trigger happy beneath a fucking *hospital* then you’ll have to think again because *they wouldn’t have been*. They would have spun it just like every other fucking time and I don’t-“

But the words won’t leave her, settling like a heavy lump in her throat as her chest heaves desperately for air and Katsuki-

Katsuki is so very fucking *tired*.

“I didn’t ask to die but I *did* and now I’m *this* and I haven’t been okay since All For One decided to get his fucking hands on me and mess me up further and I *hate it*, okay? I fucking *hate* how nothing is right and everything is screwed up twenty-ways to Sunday and I have no fucking control of anything anymore and-“

To her absolute mortification Katsuki feels her eyes burning and she squeezes them shut.

“Maybe it makes me a fucking coward,” she wrangles out thickly. “But why would I fucking *risk it* when you were right there to do whatever the fuck a Hero are supposed to do and leave me the hell out of it, *huh?*”

Endeavour’s hand tightens around her arm and she finds herself being lowered down to the grass, her legs quite uninterested in making an attempt at supporting her as she released her grip on him in favour of scrubbing a frustrated arm over her eyes.

In front of her one his knees hits the grass and Katsuki bites down on the inside of her cheek.

“Girl, look at me.”

Katsuki would, frankly, rather go drown herself.

“*Touya.*”

She reluctantly drags her arm down, making sure to scrape it against her eyes before she meets his gaze where he knelt in-front of her.

“I am uninterested in entertaining a pity party.” She jerks but his hand clamps tighter on her arm, locking her in place as her muscles curl tense with a baring of her teeth. “Whatever is between you and All Might I have no interest in getting involved in and the media will always be unreliable, to this day I do not care for it. But you’re working for me now and that means I expect you to do what is necessary.” He leans closer to her, flames licking up his face and brightening his eyes. “You cannot hide from the world so own what you are and do what is asked of you. If you can do that much I will have your back, but I will not see you make a mockery out of the profession like you did today.”

“I didn’t-“

“You *did.*” Endeavour’s gaze is heavy and Katsuki hates that it makes her feel small. “You toe a dangerous line and don’t think for a moment I’m not aware of it. You lack faith but I do not believe you are beyond redemption.” His fingers presses against the scar on his face. “In many ways you remind me of myself, as I was.” A lowering of his chin. “What I still am, in some ways.” A dip of his mouth. “Most are too terrified to tell me off but you’ve been mouthy from the moment you

caught sight of me.”

It's not her grudge to carry but Katsuki clings to it because if it wasn't for this man then Dabi-

He might have chosen a different path.

And she will never forgive him for that.

“Let me ask you this girl – is there any Hero out there that you actually *believe in*?”

Katsuki stares at him because, if she's being honest?

“No,” she admits grudgingly.

“Not even All Might.” There's *something* in the curl of his voice, something that makes her gut twist uncomfortably.

“No.”

“I've given you a chance to prove yourself. I will give you a second one.” The fire around his mouth dies down with a flicker. “In return all I ask is a chance to prove what it means to believe in a Hero.”

The words are fucking *bizarre* and Katsuki- she doesn't understand the point of it.

“Why?” she demands, her voice rough. “What does it matter what *I* think of you?”

“It matters nothing.” It's blunt and Katsuki snorts wetly. “But if I can make someone like you believe in me then maybe I have a way of understanding what it means to be the Symbol of Peace.” He lifts his head, gazing past her to the gazebo. “The world does not believe in me, not yet.”

His hand finally eases off her and she draws it against her chest, brow dipping as she stares at him.

“Do you even understand what you're asking of me?” Katsuki asks finally.

Because this man had driven Dabi beyond her grasp with a hatred that had sunken its fangs deep and the rest of his family wasn't much better. Children fearful and spiteful alike, his wife locked in a hospital room in a frail shadow of whatever she was supposed to be.

“No, but I will find out.” It sounds as much as a promise as a threat and her shoulders draw tense. “Understand this, girl. You only stand to gain from this, any other choice is the wrong one, and you know that.”

I do not, Katsuki thinks resentfully because the world is an ugly place and she has an abusive asshole asking her to believe in him.

The Number One Hero.

She'll never believe in someone like Endeavour, the very concept is a fucking *laugh*.

And yet that's exactly what he's asking of her.

“You're looking for answers in the wrong damn place,” she snaps but her voice comes out rough. “You can't even get your own damn family to believe in you and you think *I'm* the solution to your problems?”

His gaze rests dangerously on her but Katsuki is quite fucking *done* with the entire situation.

“Do you know what you really need to do, old man? *Be a better fucking husband and father*. And I think you already fucking know it but it's easier with me because it doesn't matter if you screw up, I'm expandable in the bigger picture, but your children they either hate you or fear you and don't think I didn't notice that you didn't even say *hi* to your own goddamn wife-“

“Per her doctor's recommendations-“

“And if that doesn't tell you something I don't know what to tell you!” Katsuki bursts out. “Your daughter is still here! Fuyumi is doing her fucking best to keep whatever pieces remains of this family but you'll hardly spare her a moment of your time because, what, she's not the *perfect creation* that Shouto is? And that's fucked-up in so many ways and you don't even seem to be aware of the fact that he *loathes* you! And Natsuo – he won't even come to visit unless he has to and it's just to check-up on his sister, not to spend time with *you*. You want the world to recognise you as the new Number One Hero but you can't even get your own godddamn *family* not to cower from you!”

The flames that had been steadily expanding over his face flickers bright in the dark of the night and Katsuki glares up at him, her heart pounding in her chest, a wet *thu-thump thu-thump* driven by the fury that bubbles and froths beneath her skin.

“Maybe we’re alike, you and I,” Katsuki growls. “But at least I admit that I was cruel to his parents when I denied them the truth of what I am! I didn’t take their love for granted and I fucking *miss them*. And I know – I know I might never have what I had with them again because I am not their son. But *you* – you’re their father and you’re not even *trying*. Your status will mean *shit* if you can’t even put in some goddamn *effort*.”

Endeavour’s eyes are impossible to read and her shoulders draws tight, fingers curling into the green grass beneath her.

“Don’t take them for fucking granted.” She raises her chin. “You’ve already lost one son.”

He shifts, pushing away from the ground where he’d knelt and straightening up until he towers above her.

“You will not speak to me like this again.” It’s a quiet warning.

Katsuki swallows the words that crawl up her throat as he turns on his heel, his steps heavy as he moves across the lawn and back to the house, the flames flickering and then dying as he stepped out of his shoes, placing them aside before dragging the door open and closing it shut behind him.

She draws a shuddering breath, fingers uncurling from the grass as she drew her knees against her chest and pressed her forehead down against them, arms drawing tight.

“I will become the Best!”

Her nails digs into her shins.

-

Endeavour makes no mention of their talk the next morning when he meets her in the training room but Katsuki certainly feels it in the bruises on her body and spares a moment to smooth cream over her chest after a long shower before dropping down to do her stretches.

She picks one of the retro sweaters to pull over her undershirt, a black thing with squares in purple, yellow and green spreading across it, and grabs for her water bottle and pops a electrolyte pill into it as she ambles towards the kitchen.

It’s still early, not even seven a.m., but the door opens up and Katsuki

halts to blink at Fuyumi as the young woman stepped through the front door.

“Katsuki-chan!” Her hand presses against her chest as she turns to find her two steps away.

“morning,” Katsuki greets after swallowing, lowering her bottle to dangle at her side. “Had a good night?”

“I did!” Fuyumi shrugs out of her bag and drops it aside before starting to unbutton her jacket, a light blue thing that looks nice against the white and red of her hair. “A friend of mine introduced us to a new board game that’s meant to be played during weeks or even months! It was a lot to get into. I’ve got all these papers and manuals-“

Katsuki tilts her head.

“Dungeons and Dragons?”

Fuyumi straightens up and she only just resists stepping back in surprise as the other leans towards her.

“You’ve played it?” she asks eagerly, a sparkle in her eyes that is, admittedly, very pleasant to see.

Katsuki hasn’t in *this* world but she certainly had in the woman’s. This world’s version was close enough that she’d contemplated getting into it online but it had never become more than a half-absent temptation backed with some research during late-night scrolling.

“I know about it,” she says cautiously.

“I’m still at the point of making a character template.” Fuyumi isn’t an inch deterred as she shrugs out of her jacket and grabs for her bag and zips it open, digging up papers and a player manual. “Maybe you can help me? There are all these different classes and I have to create a background for my character and the DM, Dungeon Master I mean, she suggested I buy my own dices and I’ve never done anything like this before-“

Absently Katsuki wonders if Fuyumi had had a hobby that was entirely something of her own. D&D campaigns demanded a certain time investment, weekly meetings and a certain struggle to get schedules to match-up but it had been well-worth it when it *did* work out.

“There’s a store not far away from the mall that sells a lot of D&D stuff.” Katsuki scratches at the back of her neck. “I don’t mind tagging along.”

“That would be a great help! I’m feeling a bit overwhelmed and I-“ Fuyumi quiets abruptly, papers crinkling as she pulls them close, the colour fading from her cheeks.

Katsuki cranes her head around to look at Endeavour where he stands, one heavy palm curled around the edge of the towel resting against his neck, eyes on his daughter.

His eyes shifts momentarily to hers and Katsuki’s lips draws back.

“I’m... heading into town later today. I can drive you.” The sentences are short, rough, but Katsuki’s shoulders relaxes just an inch and in front of her Fuyumi’s eyss widens.

“O-oh no, you don’t need to do that-“

“I want to!” Endeavour’s voice rises and his knuckles tightens before slowly uncurling as Fuyumi’s shoulders drew up in response. “I want to,” he repeats quieter.

“I’d like that then,” Fuyumi says after an awkward moment of silence.

Endeavour gives a short nod.

“I’ll be in the yard.”

He turns on his heel, disappearing down the corridor, and they both stare after him until he’s out of sight.

“Did something happen while I was gone?” Fuyumi wonders.

Katsuki snorts, raising her bottle and taking a long swallow.

-

“Oh! We’re still good for Sunday then?”

Katsuki rolls the cigarette between idly her fingers, window open, feet thrown up and leaning on the back legs of the chair as she studies the spread of yellow that had begun to climb through the closest tree.

“I wouldn’t have said anything if I didn’t mean it.”

"It's not like I'm doubting you but you're all busy with Hero work so I wasn't sure you'd manage to catch the day off." There's a backdrop of voices, the sound of plates being scraped, and she'd clearly called in the middle of breakfast. *"I got the OK from Aizawa-sensei. He says we need to be accompanied by someone, and he'd arrange for it, but we have the entire day for whatever you have planned!"* Mina's voice is bright with excitement and Katsuki halts the roll of the cigarette with a hum.

"Nine work alright?"

"I'll be up and ready," Mina promises. *"And- oh, Shouto said to let you know he'll be home next Saturday? I don't know why he couldn't have texted you but, well, he's gesturing at me so I'll probably shut about that... And oh! Midoriya wanted to talk? I gave him your number. Also! We met the Big Three of U.A., did I mention that?"*

"Big Three?" Katsuki echoes blankly.

"Yeah! It was pretty exciting, we all got our asses kicked!"

"All of you?" She tucks the cigarette behind her ear.

"I'll tell you all about it in person, class starts soon and anyway I meant to ask you something before that. You know how we had Internships?" She hears the scrape of a chair, the voices quieting, and she realises Mina must have moved away from the table. *"A few of us are allowed to have Hero-Work Studies but my spot was a bit of a one-time deal and they won't accept me back for it. I didn't get a lot of offers after the Sports Festival but you're working with all these Heroes and I was wondering if... maybe you can put a word in for me?"*

Katsuki's brow creases.

"You don't have to! I understand if you're not comfortable with it."

Katsuki can practically see the fretful hand waving through the air.

"But this is a pretty big chance and... I want to at least ask before I give up on it." Mina huffs. *"I'm not joking about getting our asses kicked and they were only third years, you know? I... need to get better."*

Something curls in her chest and she drags her feet down from the windowsill.

"I'll talk with Best Jeanist," Katsuki promises "I can't guarantee anything, and he's still on the down-low since Kamino, but he might be able to get you in contact with someone if he can't take you on."

"Thank you." Mina's voice is relieved.

"s nothing." Katsuki glances towards the clock. "I'm heading into town. We have the day off, apparently, and doing some shopping."

"Sounds fun!" Mina enthuses. *"Send your prayers because I think Ectoplasm-sensei is plotting to kill us all with math."*

Chapter End Notes

Repercussions and consequences, an awareness of what a misstep can cost her. Katsuki is in a rough seat and she's all too aware of it. It's not easy when it feels like the world hates you and it's just... Endeavour was absolutely going to call her out on it because he holds those around her to a certain standard.

And Katsuki is absolutely going to call *him* out on his bullshit.

Katsuki interests him in two ways - she reminds him of himself but she's also someone who doesn't idolize All Might. In a society where he's constantly being compared to him he sees a chance to be something All Might failed at. He doesn't really want to face what he's done wrong either because in his mind he *hasn't* so- yeah, this.

Of course, he has no idea why Katsuki would sooner spit at his grave than entertain such a thought.

I reflected on this while I was watching the fourth season of BNHA and I have some thoughts that will pop up as we go along.

Fuyumi has spent her years trying to keep her family together, a role that has cost her, and I am here for her finding some fun hobbies to indulge with her friends. It's something that Endeavour wouldn't approve of but she has Katsuki to back her up, she's no longer alone in that house, and damn, she deserves it.

We're nearing the next arc of the manga with Overhaul but we have some chapters before that.

Thank you all for the love and support - I cannot say that enough because you all make this an absolute joy to write. I'm almost caught-up with your comments too, hoping to find some time later tonight when I'm not dying from the heat.

This has been chapter 61 of In The End and I'm on tumblr as

artsy-death if you wanna say hi there.

I hope you enjoyed!

Rusty Bonds

Chapter Notes

Shitty Hair = Kirishima

Sparky = Kaminari

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

“So, indulge me – how has your first week as a Pro-Hero been?”

Phone pressed against her ear Katsuki’s eyes shift idly over the rows of books.

“s been fine. A bit boring and a weird amount of paperwork.”

“I heard something about a hospital fight?”

“Endeavour took care of it.” Katsuki picks down on the books, twisting it around to scan over the back of it. “I... might have messed-up a bit,” she bites out as she shoves it beneath her arm. “I keep second-guessing what I do.” She keeps her voice low, shuffling deeper into the dark dim light and away from Fuyumi who was in deep conversation with one of the shopkeepers. “s frustrating.”

“Want to talk about it?”

Katsuki drags a hand through her hair.

“Endeavour already spoke to me about it,” she says finally and the memory of it makes her stomach churn with embarrassment. “I wasn’t doing what I was supposed to be doing because I keep being afraid of the fucking backlash of it. He told me off.”

“It’s natural to feel as you do.” Her shoulders eases an inch. *“Your situation is unprecedented and came about from quiet volatile circumstances. But you shouldn’t be afraid of doing your work.”*

“And if I screw up?” Katsuki asks tensely. “This world-“

“Then we’ll handle that situation when it comes to it,” Best Jeanist interrupts her gently. *“If you follow the laws and act responsibly you cannot be faulted and you’ll find that more than one person have your back.”*

It's... weirdly reassuring. More than Endeavour's words had been, certainly, despite his higher ranking.

"... Thank you."

"Of course!" Best Jeanist sounds pleased and she can almost see his hand following the smooth curl of his fringe in that ridiculous habit of his. *"Your actions will be judged more harshly, there is no way around that. Not only because of the circumstances that brought you to work under Endeavour but also because of your physical age."* This, Katsuki already knows. *"There is a lot of people who think you too young for the position you have."* She knows. *"I understand it's frustrating."* His voice is sympathetic. *"But that doesn't mean I'm going to stand by and do nothing. I have, admittedly, grown quite fond of you."*

Katsuki scrubs a hand against her cheek as she feels heat crawl up to colour them red.

"You don't need to be so blunt about it," she mutters.

"I have found that being straightforward with you seem to be the best way to handle thing," Best Jeanist says without remorse, the asshole.

"I don't... hate you," Katsuki says after a moment and then grimaces. "Sorry," she tags on lamely.

"Don't be." Best Jeanist sounds amused of all things. *"I know I didn't handle things the best when it comes to you, even if we both know it might have been for the best."* And Katsuki does know which is why she ultimately shakes the resentment off even if she hesitates to do more. *"I am glad you gave me a second chance all things considered. Now. Why don't you tell me the real reason for calling?"*

"You say that as if I never call for pleasantries."

"I'm waiting for the day you'll call me for a simple chat," Best Jeanist says with that same kind of blunt honesty that Katsuki has to appreciate. *"Now, do I have to pull it out of you or will you tell me on your own?"*

"I'm calling about a favour, actually," Katsuki admits as she pauses by the dice. "Are you aware 1-A is doing Hero-Studies this term?"

"I am aware," Best Jeanist agrees. *"I was planning on inviting you back to my agency for it had the situation been different."*

Katsuki blinks.

“Oh.” Her fingers presses against a package of dice without really seeing them. “I didn’t know that.”

“I never told you so I wouldn’t expect you to,” Best Jeanist says breezily. *“Am I correct in guessing this regards miss Ashido-san?”*

“Yeah,” Katsuki agrees. “Apparently her thing from the Internship was a one-time deal. I know you’re still recovering from Kamino but I know how important these things are and-“

“You’re being a good friend and you don’t need to explain yourself, I promise.” Best Jeanist’s voice is warm. *“Now, are you asking me as your mentor or as a fellow Hero?”*

“Hero,” Katsuki answers without hesitation because it’d feel cheap, somehow, to request it because Best Jeanist had a misplaced sense of duty to her. “Favour for a favour,” she says strongly.

“I accept.” There’s a shift on the line, a rustle of paper, and Katsuki stares at the shelf in front of her because the quick agreement had honestly caught her off-guard. *“You are correct in that I am still recovering so serving her Hero-Studies with me wouldn’t be optional. But I do know one or two who have been considering taking someone on... I’ll reach out and see what I can do.”*

“Thank you,” Katsuki says, pressing the phone closer. “It means a lot,” she admits quietly.

“We older Heroes have a responsibility to the younger generation. It is my genuine pleasure.”

-

“So, there are twelve basic classes?”

“Barbarian, bard, cleric, druid, fighter, monk, paladin, ranger, rogue, sorcerer, warlock and wizard,” Katsuki agrees as she dices the tomatoes and scrapes them into the pot alongside the garlic. There’s a hiss and she lowers the temperature, poking them around. “Any class caught your interest when you were first going through them?”

“Bard,” Fuyumi muses, papers rustling as she shuffled things around. “Or druid, maybe?”

Endeavour is seated at the end of the table, looking thorough a thick bundle of reports, and Fuyumi had taken up the rest of the table with books and papers and new dices building a small pyramid in the midst of it, pen in hand as she browsed through one of the beginner guides.

“Bard is what I usually played as,” Katsuki says idly as she grabs for one of the yellow onions, chopping off the bottom before peeling it. “I liked the irony of a deaf one.”

“Bard: an inspiring magician whose powers echoes the music of creation,” Fuyumi reads.

“And druid?”

“A priest of the old faith, wielding the power of nature – moonlight and plant growth, fire and lightning - and adopting animal forms.” Which was about the same as it had been in her world, Katsuki thinks, wrinkling her nose at the sting of the onion as she worked her way quickly through the fourth one.

“Druids,” Katsuki says finally, “are for those who like magical solutions and generally just enjoys resourcefulness. I’d say bard is a bit about talking your way out of problems – it’s generally a pretty chatty role and there’s a lot of jokes about the bard seducing the BBEG, or the occasional dragon.”

“Dragon?” Fuyumi asks sceptically.

“You mean you’ve never looked at a big, beautiful scaled beast and thought about seducing it into bed?” Katsuki glances over her shoulder with a waggle of her brows. “I’m not joking, it’s a thing, look it up.”

“I think I will not,” Fuyumi says a bit decisively and Katsuki hears a pen being dragged over the paper. “What about cleric? *A priestly champion who wields divine magic in service of a higher power.*”

“Big goals and big weapons,” Katsuki answers after a moment. “It leans pretty heavily into the whole D&D religion system so a lot of moral questions and whether to kill or not. Good defence.” She scrapes the onions into the stew. “It’s just basics, and you generally have some freedom with what you decide to do with your character.” She pours water into the pot, followed by a generous helping of broth, salt and pepper before stirring it. “Do you know what race you want to play as?”

“Tiefling,” Fuyumi answers without hesitation. “They’re very pretty.”

“What, exactly, is the point of this *game*?” Endeavour’s voice is rough with scepticism as he looks up from his papers to the upside down page Fuyumi had turned up to reveal a dark blue Tiefling with long spiralling horns against a backdrop of a lush green forest.

“Other than a way to have fun?” Katsuki asks dryly.

“Here.” Fuyumi slides the book closer to her father and Katsuki decides to shut her mouth. “Look, everyone picks a class and race that work together under an adventure. The Dungeon Master is the one who controls the narrative and you play together to get through puzzles and riddles they’ve created.”

It’s a pretty simplified explanation, Katsuki acknowledges as she grabs for the bunch of carrots and twists the greenery off it.

But not wrong.

Endeavour slowly accepts the book, turning his pile of papers away to flip to the beginning of it, scanning over it as Katsuki glances briefly over her shoulder as she washes them.

“Every class and race have their strengths and weaknesses and we all make choices and then roll our dice to measure how successful we are.” Fuyumi’s voice is soft. “I was watching some people play together and it looked like a lot of fun.”

“So... it’s a game of strategy,” Endeavour says after a long moment. “We used to do something similar when I went to U.A.”

“How so?” Fuyumi asks with a brief note of hesitance as she accepts the book back.

Endeavour’s brows dips but he leans back in his chair with a *hm*. “Our teacher would create scenarios and we’d have to work through them in groups with our Quirks in mind. How to take out the Villain and limit casualties – that kind of thing.”

Aizawa had done something similar and a lot of their math problems had had some sort of Hero and Villain or Civilian scenario meant to get the students thinking about the different situations they might find themselves in.

Though I’m doubtful Cartesian points are about to save lives, she thinks in

amusement as she finished dicing the carrots and poured them into the pot, which had begun to bubble.

She turns on the stove top beside it and pours some oil and a piece of butter into the pan, waiting until it had melted down before dropping the ready diced meat into it and turning the heat down an inch to avoid charring it.

Behind her Fuyumi has coaxed Endeavour to look through the different classes, their weaknesses and strengths, and Katsuki drags her noise cancelling headphones up over her ears as she browns the meat in preparation of adding it to the stew for a long boil.

-

“Since all coefficients of polynomial P are real, the complex conjugate to the given zeroes are also zeroes of P .”

Katsuki shades the large black spot on the cows back, taking care to make sure the lines were smooth.

“... Are we still speaking Japanese?”

“What did she say?”

“Aaah, this is impossible! Ectoplasm-sensei is trying to kill us!”

The mic is momentarily covered, complaints muffled, before Mina’s voice came back. *“Okay, repeat it but slower this time, I need to write it down-”*

“Give the phone to me.”

“What, no, I’ve got this Hito-“

There’s a scuffle as Katsuki shifts to shading the cow’s eyes in the same dark colour, curving three long extravagant eyelashes and trading a four-pronged sparkle in the middle of the dark pupil.

“You three are hopeless, let me handle this,” Shinsou’s voice comes close, sounding quite fed-up.

Katsuki doesn’t envy him – Mina was bad enough, add Shitty Hair and Sparky to the mix and, well.

“How come Shouto aren’t helping you?” she wonders as he greets her tiredly.

“He gave up on them,” Shinsou says flatly. “How they’ve survived middle-grade math I do not know.”

“Hey!” Mina splutters.

“What? But he just went to get tea!” Sparky exclaims, sounding rather horrified.

“Twenty minutes ago,” Shinsou deadpans.

“But you won’t leave us, right, Shinsou!?” Sparky demands. *“Without you we’re doomed!”*

“Oi, Kaminari-“

“Get off me-“

“Hey! Be careful!”

Katsuki doodles a pair of horns onto her cow, listening to the voices and then finally the slam of a door before Shinsou breathed a harsh sigh into the phone.

“I hear you’ve been making new friends,” Katsuki comments in amusement.

“Friends of fungus, I don’t even know,” Shinsou mutters. *“They won’t leave me alone. Especially Kaminari keeps popping up everywhere lately.”*

“Making friends is good for you.”

“I do not want to hear those words from you.”

Katsuki’s mouth twitches.

“Other than math, how’s life going?” she asks because Shinsou doesn’t sound like he’s in the mood for school work.

“We got our asses soundly handed to us.” She listens to Shinsou moving down the hall, away from the scuffle that had broken out, audible even through the door. *“And everyone is stressing about the Hero-Studies thing.”*

“Mina mentioned.” Katsuki draws a lopsided grin on the cow and then immediately regrets it, reaching for the eraser. *“Have you gotten any offers?”*

“Didn’t really have time to make much of an impression during the Sports Festival and a lot of people would consider my Quirk a villainous one.”

“So, no then?”

“Aizawa offered to let me spend it with him,” Shinsou says after a moment. “I declined. He already helped me catch-up after my transfer and he’s gonna be busy teaching anyhow. But... I was thinking of maybe reaching out to the police station and see if I can do my Hero-Studies there.”

Katsuki hand pauses.

“With Detective Tsukauchi?”

“How did you know?” Shinsou demands.

“Because you both have Quirks that unnerves people?” Katsuki asks dryly. “I can’t imagine most are enthusiastic about spending time with someone who will catch every white little lie that leaves your mouth.”

“It’s funny how both sharp and dumb you can be,” Shinsou sighs and Katsuki stares at her cow, wondering if she should be offended or not. *“But yeah. It was Aizawa’s suggestion and it’s better than nothing, you know? He doesn’t have an offensive Quirk but he’s rather infamous for his involvement with a lot of Heroes so I doubt I’ll be bored.”*

And you’ll get a good inside view on the gritty-work, Katsuki thinks with an absent hum as she draws a stiff toothed grin to her cow.

Tsukauchi seemed to be involved in a lot of shit – he’d been there at her kidnapping and she’d spotted him alongside Endeavour on more than one occasion in just a week.

And he’d been among those who approached her in Nedzu’s office which was... hm.

“It’s a good idea,” she adds belatedly when she realises Shinsou was waiting for some sort of response.

“I’m glad you approve,” he says dryly. *“It’s a bit... unusual. But Aizawa seems quite sure it would be a learning experience. He promised to talk to him about it so, we’ll see, I guess.”*

Katsuki grunts, drawing two half-curved lines behind the cow for the

trunk of a tree and spends a moment looking at it despairingly.

“Shouto has been withdrawn since the provisional,” Shinsou says as Katsuki is wondering if just colouring the damn thing would save it and-

Katsuki finds it odd how Shinsou keeps pushing at her about others in the class while making no inclination to bring up the fact that she still watches him with suspicious eyes, making no motion to hide the fact that his Quirk terrified the *hell* out of her.

She feels it like a damning thing.

“He screwed up and nearly blew me to bits because he was busy tangling with that loudmouth from Shiketsu,” Katsuki says instead of lingering on it because she doesn’t even know how to go about touching on the subject.

Katsuki’s skin is hardier than most, it had to be or she’d be constantly peeling her raw skin off her arms from her own explosions, but her own nitroglycerin coupled with the sheer fucking *heat* from Shouto’s flames that had come in the form of a roaring tornado was a disaster waiting to happen.

“Ah, he’s waiting for you to blow up on him for it,” Shinsou hums.

“You think he deserves it?” she asks, idly curious.

“He’s got his issues,” the purple haired boy answer after a moment. *“I’m not going to pretend I know the entirety of it but maybe you do, considering where you’re staying at the moment.”* Which Katsuki translates into Shinsou having suspicions.

He came from a shitty circumstances and she likes the suspicious parts of him – it’s familiar.

“I doubt it’s something talking will solve.” Katsuki draws some branches from the misshapen trunk and grabs for the brown to fill it in.

“I thought the same but Aizawa is all about talking things through.” Shinsou sounds long-suffering but not annoyed. *“Midnight too, but to a lesser degree I suppose. Present Mic at least doesn’t bug me about it but I guess it’s to give me some space.”*

“Best Jeanist is the same,” she mutters, shading a part a bit too

aggressively.

"It's supposedly for our best."

Tell that to my fucking nightmares.

She grabs for the green and makes a cloud-like halo around the branches because hell if she's doing the individual leaves thing.

"They moved into the teacher's dorm here at U.A. but I mentioned I'm still allowed to visit them off-campus, right? Whenever they spend time there."

"You did," Katsuki agrees after a moment of grasping for the memory.

"It's weird but it's starting to feel a bit like home, you know?" Katsuki supposes she does – she has no idea when Misaki and Masaru's house had gone from a place that felt rather like a prison to something that was a place of safety from the rest of the world but it *had*.

She misses it.

"That's good, isn't it?"

"It's a bit odd. I never thought... but that's neither here nor there I suppose." Shinsou sounds tired. *"I never thought I'd join the Hero Course either but here I am. Mina mentioned what you did to that guy before me so I guess I have you to thank for that as well."*

"He was a creep, he would have gotten himself kicked-out sooner or later." Katsuki throws the pen aside and grabs blindly for a new one. "I just sped up the process because U.A. was refusing to admit to making a mistake inviting a fucking *pervert* to become a Hero."

It had been sickening and Katsuki sincerely hopes she broke his fucking *ribs*.

"Really, the girls were complaining but they wouldn't take it seriously. Fuckers."

"Look at that, something good came out of you playing the part of a guy."
A pause. *"Or is that rude to say?"*

Katsuki snorts. "s not like I care and as far as this world is concerned I was male for eight years."

"Some of them are still struggling with it, you know? I think it's because you're not confirming to what they're expecting. You're still just you."

Shinsou sounds amused. *“As foul-mouthed and explosive as always.”*

“There are advantages and disadvantages to looking as I do. But I am who I am and people can shove their fucking *expectations* elsewhere.”

“Don’t take this the wrong way,” Shinsou says on the other end of the phone. *“But I quite like it.”*

“You mean I *shouldn’t* be expecting a bouquet of flowers next time we see each other?”

“I’m very gay.”

“You mean there was a chance before I came out?”

“Unlike you I have a moderate amount of self-preservation and am not looking to have my dick blown-off.”

“I’m flattered you considered your options thoroughly,” Katsuki responds, amusement curling thick inside of her as she drew a circle in the middle of the tree.

“Eh, you’re handsome enough that many would be willing to look past your personality.” Shinsou’s tone is dry and unembarrassed. *“Did you know Kirishima used to have a crush on you?”*

“I did not need to know that,” Katsuki says flatly.

“I happen to find it very funny.”

“Fuck off.”

Shinsou laughs – a low sound that more a huff than anything else.

“You still up for some math?” he asks after a long moment of comfortable silence where she finished up the last of her drawing, pen pausing.

Katsuki stares down at the black and white cow beneath a tree with a single red apple amidst a cloud of green and drags a hand down her face as she glances out the window.

“Yeah, sure.”

Chapter End Notes

Welcome back to this!

Gosh darn I have so many thoughts about Fuyumi but everything at its pace. The Todoroki family is such a mess.

Aaanyway!

I spent far too long thinking about where Shinsou might spend his Hero-Studies. He joined at such an odd time that his Internship was a bit of a lousy thing, weighed-up by the fact that Aizawa has been helping him get in shape, at least. I decided that if there's anyone who might see the value in a quirk like Shinsou's it's someone like Tsukauchi.

Who do you think Mina will spend her Hero-Studies with, hmmm? Oh the plans.

Next chapter Katsuki makes a tour to U.A. and I cannot tell you how much I've been looking forward to this chapter. If it all fits in one. We'll see.

You are all absolutely wonderful, I will keep shouting that out because I cannot express it enough in my replies, but damn, do I adore you. You make this so fun to write and just - have chapter 62 of In The End.

I hope you enjoyed!

At A Crawl

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Katsuki picks a Sunday because, as far as she's been able to observe, Endeavour does not officially work during them, unless in the case of an emergency. And this particular one he had business elsewhere and wouldn't be back until Tuesday according to his schedule.

She's not about to fucking ask for *permission* so Katsuki finds solutions where she can and it had been easy enough to catch a look at his office.

"I don't care what you do," Endeavour tells her at the end of the training as Katsuki wipes sweat away from her dripping brow, struggling to catch her breath. "But you're expected to be here, with Eraserhead or Best Jeanist at the end of the day. Fuyumi knows to tell me so don't try to play any tricks."

Katsuki snorts. "I'll behave."

"Make sure that you do." Endeavour straightens out to his full height, staring down at her. "Prove to me that I can trust you and you'll find yourself doing more than paperwork."

It's a challenge but it feels like manipulation and blackmail and she bares her teeth.

"Afraid I'll mess with your reputation?"

"No." She twitches in surprise at the flat surety of his voice. "I'll remain Number One no-matter how this plays out." His mouth curls up as she draws tight. "You on the other hand?" He rolls his shoulders. "Play your cards right and we both have to win from this."

Her skin prickles, the need to *hurt* wiring tight inside of her.

But it's not like he's wrong and it makes her hate him just a little bit more.

"You did well today." She catches the bottle he throws her. "Keep it up and we might make something out of you yet."

-

She isn't horribly surprised to find only Fuyumi in the kitchen when she wanders inside with a towel thrown over her shoulder.

Her ribs are throbbing, bruises aggravated by the morning training, but it's a distant thing and hardly bothersome in the larger picture. It is harder to judge if there is any internal bleeding with her chest looking the way it does but since she had yet to keel over Katsuki isn't about to brood on it.

"Endeavour left already?"

"He's taking an early train," Fuyumi tells her, placing down a pot of tea and the fragrance is deep and flowery.

Katsuki is good with food but tea – whatever magic Fuyumi indulged it meant that hers was always heaps better and she sinks into her chair and reaches for it immediately as the younger woman took her own seat.

She does take care to pour for Fuyumi first, she's not a fucking heathen, but the livid red liquid that spills into her cup is a fucking slice of heaven when it comes to scent and she can't wait to taste it.

"You already ate?" Katsuki asks as she piles up fish and tofu onto her plates, scooping miso into its bowl, Fuyumi reaching to serve rice into another and sprinkling a mix of seaweed and egg spice onto it before putting it in place before her.

"I'm meeting up with my friends after to go through what we have so far." Fuyumi folds her legs beneath her chair, resting her elbows on the table. "I'm quite excited for it."

Fuyumi cradles her cup of tea between her hands but does not blow on it and Katsuki absently wonders if she's using her quirk to regulate the heat of the cup to something less scalding as she takes a sip of her own only to burn her tongue.

She takes another smaller one because fuck it, the tea is *that good*.

"How many are you? That are playing together." Katsuki tucks into the food, realizing quite suddenly how ravenous she is as the first taste of tofu melts on her tongue and she wastes no time cramming another piece into her mouth.

“There are five of us.” Fuyumi draws some hair behind her ear, white with little flares of red in it, a terribly pretty combination. “It’s been hard to find days that work, since two of them are Heroes, so it tends to be a bit short notice for our meetings.”

Katsuki blinks at her.

“Anyone I know?” she asks after swallowing down a large piece of fish.

“Maybe,” Fuyumi says with a secretive little smile and Katsuki snorts but doesn’t press the issue, deciding that it was probably good that the younger woman had a thing that was hers entirely.

“I’ve been wondering something,” Katsuki says as she stirs her rice with her chopsticks. “But your hair – it’s a quirk thing, right? Natsuo has white and ice, Endeavour red and fire, you and Shouto-“

“Fire and ice,” Fuyumi agrees as Katsuki studies her expression. “But mine isn’t perfect.” Her hand touches against her hair. “Unlike Shouto mine is more... intermingled, I suppose.” Her hand slides down the curve of her hair. “The fire part makes my ice weaker and I have too much ice to make a larger flame than this.”

Fuyumi cups her hands together and a small flame flickers to life in the cradle of it and Katsuki stares at the light yellow flame before Fuyumi’s fingers folded down over it to extinguish it.

“Even so much took me years to manage,” the younger woman admits as she looks up to meet her eyes. “Touya... he had fire. But his body couldn’t handle it. Shouto, out of all of us, is the only one who turned out as our father wanted.”

Katsuki spends a moment entertaining the thought of Dabi with red or white hair but – whether he dyed it, or if anything had screwed with it, his hair had always been dark as ash and it’s the way her mind pictures him, scars and all, eyes just a shade darker than his flames.

As our father wanted.

Damning words, Katsuki thinks as she bites down on another tofu piece.

-

Katsuki hauls her bike onto the bus, crams it in beside a stroller,

ignores the looks sent her way and plops down into an empty seat, dropping her backpack at her feet and pulling up her mobile.

She hesitates over Aizawa's name and then scrolls further down to pick out Midnight's among the numbers Mina had supplied her with and shoots off a short message to ask if Recovery Girl was on campus.

Barely a moment has passed before she gets a confirmation back with the other woman letting her know she was sending a heads-up to the healer.

Katsuki drops her head against the window with a *clunk* of the helmet she's still wearing.

She hadn't bothered with wearing anything fancy, not with the plans she had, but she had picked a simple grey sweater to wear over her white undershirt and pair of jeans. There's a small package in her inside pocket which she presses her hand momentarily against with a breath.

A movement to her left makes her look up instinctively and her shoulders draws tense because the man is already looking at her and Katsuki-

She fucking *recognises* him.

"What the fuck are you doing here?" she hisses as she shifts to get as much of her back towards the window and as far as physically possible from him because *what the fuck?* Is she *collecting* stalkers now? Is this what her life had come to?

She'd be a fucking idiot if she didn't recognise him from the hair only because who the hell wore their hair like a fucking *clock hand?* Arrow? Fuck if she knows. That and the fact that it is *white* and his flat dead stare-

It's the same guy who had sat down on the train when she was travelling to Best Jeanist for the first time.

"Hello, Touya Katsuki. I see you are in good health."

She gives him a flat look for the politeness in his tone because fucking *what?*

"What is that supposed to mean?" she growls as she slips her hand into her pocket and curls her hand around one of the pocket knives

Himiko had gifted her with. This one is orange, she knows, because she'd taken some strange delight in matching it with her jacket.

She thinks that, it's probably far more polite to the rest of the passengers if she were to stab him with it rather than blow up the fucking *bus*.

"We have been watching you." *We?* Katsuki wonders with a strange mix of resignation and irritation. "You do not need to look so wary, I am not here to hurt you." She narrows her eyes at him. "Ah, I was warned about your distrustful nature but rest assured I speak the truth. Young Master wishes for the two of you to meet under amenable circumstances so I am merely here to extend an invitation."

Fucking *warned*? What is she, a rabid dog?

"Naturally, we needed to make our own observations first but you went above and beyond what we expected from you and it falls in line with the information we already had on you."

She gives him a blank look.

"You sent that plant-idiot after me?" she asks finally because nothing else stands out and she's fairly fucking certain no-one would be idiotic enough to put up surveillance cameras in Endeavour's household.

(She pushes down the blaring alarm the very thought gives her because, no, that is pure paranoia and she fucking *knows it*).

His head tilts a fraction and Katsuki's fingers twitches. "Sent? No. But it is human nature to put blame on others rather than taking responsibility. No matter how irrational." His mouth lifts at the corner but the dead look in his eyes does not change. "You understand, don't you?"

That you put ideas into his head to fuck with me? Crystal clear.

Outside the bus her stop is crawling slowly closer but it's another good twenty minutes and Katsuki absolutely do not want to spend that amount of time with her newest stalker. And she still doesn't know *why her* because what the hell had they even taken from that fight? Her being an evasive coward? That she is good at fucking *dodging*?

And what fucking *information* did they think they had on her? Had the League been talking behind her back? Someone else? She's fairly

fucking certain that Dabi and Himiko wouldn't let that kind of shit get out but that didn't mean the others wouldn't and-

There were the Pro-Heroes too on top of that and-

Stop thinking the fucking worst, Katsuki snarls at herself in frustration as she curls into her jacket, mouth dipping down. *He could just be talking shit and you know it.*

But the *what if* nags, crowding and pushing at her as she regards him.

Did it really involve her or was this some way to get to Endeavour? *Young Master* sounded like some fucking mafia bullshit if she's ever heard it, certainly something criminal considering the stalking and the fact that they had sent someone after her to discover fucking *something*. And more than one, an organization with a leader of some sort.

She hisses out a breath through clenched teeth.

"I understand that you're manipulative as shit and I do not appreciate you egging idiots to come after me."

"My apologies." The words falls flat and insincere. "I assure you there will be compensation for the trouble we've caused you." He smiles and the hair on her neck prickles because yeah, *no fucking thank you*.

He reaches into the pocket of his jacket and pulls out a simple card that he holds out to her between two fingers.

Black, a single number printed in purple against it.

"Why should I accept this?" she asks despite knowing full-well she is going to take it.

Like she is going to just fucking *not-accept* a lead to her newest stalker. She's not an *idiot*.

"I believe you'll find it interesting, if nothing else," the other tells her as she pulls her left hand out of her pocket and slowly accepts it, the right remaining tightly curled around the knife. "We'll be expecting a call within a week." He leans forward and Katsuki's lips draws back instinctively, wondering how much trouble she'd be in if she just shoved the knife through those fucking dead eyes of his. "We have a common interest, *Touya-san*. Change is coming."

She opens her mouth but there's a blur of movement and she gasps, hand twitching to move but everything is suddenly *too slow*, and she feels her hand trying to move but it's like her world had turned into fucking *sludge* and her breath is suddenly too loud, her eyes very, very slowly widening as he rises up, swinging easily down the two steps and out the door as it opens up while her lips are still parting.

-

Katsuki finally gets off two stops after she's supposed to and if she spends ten minutes curled up in an alley fighting back a panic attack that's entirely her own fucking business.

-

She makes it to U.A. at eight-forty and makes a beeline towards Recovery Girl's office, still on edge but struggling to shove it down, card in her pocket and not a single visible mark to explain why her world had briefly turned into a crawl.

Fucking Quirks, she thinks with some resentment as she takes the stairs and knocks on the right door, resisting the urge to shove it open before the call to enter came.

She kicks the door shut behind her and swings herself up on the closest bed.

"Good morning to you too," Recovery Girl greets her as she places a tab down and pushes closer on a rolling chair with a squeak that makes Katsuki twitch. "Midnight told me you wanted to see me?"

"Bruised ribs," Katsuki bites out with a harsh exhale.

The other hums. "Shirt off then."

She shoves her jacket off and drags both sweater and t-shirt over her head, letting them fall in a heap beside her, unable to help the way her hand lands on top of it, feeling the press of the knife beneath her palm as the Pro-Hero leant forward.

"I'm going to press against your ribs," the other warns her and Katsuki appreciates it, she *does*, but it doesn't stop her from tensing as small hands touches against her scarred chest, pressing down, eyes darting momentarily up and then down to focus on what she was doing as Katsuki stares over her shoulder and against the wall.

Her chest had turned mottled from the bruising beneath the scarring and Katsuki personally thinks it's a very cut-and-dry issue but Recovery Girls is frowning as she leans back.

"This is from two days ago at least," the other tells her with disapproval. "And some of the bruising is just hours old."

"Just fix it," Katsuki mutters. "*Please*," she adds at the marginally judgemental look.

"You're nearly as bad as Midoriya," Recovery Girl sighs. "But at least there's no broken bones." She leans forward and Katsuki lowers her head, allowing the other to plant a kiss on her cheek with a low breath as she felt the powers take hold, pain she hadn't even been aware of lessening the strain on her breathing as she straightening up with a roll of her shoulders.

"Is that all?" Recovery Girl remains in place in front of her as Katsuki drags her t-shirt back over her head and wrestles her headphones up through the narrow hole. "Nothing else bothering you?"

"Everything," Katsuki growls as she gets into her sweater and reaches for her jacket. "Is just fucking *peachy*."

-

The 1-A dorm is awake and buzzing as Katsuki steps inside after parking her bike outside and nearly immediately finds herself greeted by several loud voices that makes her twitch, still on edge and feeling quite ready to commit fucking *murder* the next time she sees that *fucker*-

"Well, well, look what the cat dragged in," Punk drawls in greeting, balancing two cups of tea very carefully. "I hear you and Mina have plans today."

"What about it?" Katsuki grumbles as she shoves her hands into her pockets, absently glancing around before focusing back on the other.

"Anything fun planned?" Punk leans forward, lowering her voice. "You can tell me, I promise not to share with these idiots."

"Yeah, no," Katsuki snorts.

"Psh, boring." Punk rocks back. "Mina is upstairs getting ready. Want me to go grab her?"

“I’ll wait.”

“Suit yourself,” Punk shrugs with a half-smile before she stepped back and turned to amble over to Ponytail who looks up from a book with a smile that blossoms wide and pretty on her lips as Punk sits down across her with a flush of pink on her cheeks.

Katsuki snorts, threading over and dropping down in one of the bean bags, letting herself sink into its softness with a rough breath, backpack squishing uncomfortably against her back.

She grimaces and wrestles out of it, shoving it down on the floor beside her.

“You look positively grumpy this morning,” Shinsou drawls as he drops down in the one beside her, stretching out before making himself comfortable. “Not that I expected sunshine and rainbows but – you know.” He shrugs.

“Just an idiot on the bus,” Katsuki mutters, eyeing him. “You look like you haven’t slept in days.”

Shinsou grimaces. “Insomnia is rough,” he admits. “I got some sleeping pills so – I’ll give those a try tonight.”

Katsuki grunts noncommittally.

“What are you doing today anyway?” he asks in interest. “Mina says you’ve been very secretive.”

“Maybe I’m stealing her away and joining the League of Villains,” Katsuki grumbles. “They don’t ask as many questions.”

“Your humour is atrocious,” Shinsou says flatly. “I thought I’d give you a heads-up but now I’m not sure I want to.”

Katsuki gives him a wary look. “Heads-up?”

Shinsou hums, glancing towards the stairs before slumping forward and leaning in to her. “You need a chaperone for today, right?”

“Yeah?” Katsuki frowns at him. “What about it?”

“Well, you won’t like the only person that was available.” Shinsou drags a hand through the wild messy strands of his purple hair. “Aizawa will probably tell you but – well. There’s a lot of preparations and stuff going on and everyone is busy-“

“It’s All Might, isn’t it?” Katsuki’s lips draw back with a hiss as he nods. “Fuck.” She scrubs her hands over her face, palms pressing momentarily against her eyes as she struggles against the violent anger that had surged through her, itching against her skin.

“This day is for Mina,” Shinsou says cautiously. “You’re doing this for her – right? So whatever is between you and All Might–”

“Should not be the focus today,” Katsuki bites out because *fuck* she knows that he’s right but the resentment bubbles inside of her anyway. “I know. I *know* but–” A hand touches cautiously against the back of her hand and she lifts her head, meeting purple eyes. “You’re right.” A tremble running through her and she hates it.

“You haven’t really slowed down since your kidnapping.” Shinsou’s fingers curl hesitantly around her wrist and Katsuki finds herself allowing it, his grip tightening when she made no move to shake him off. “What are you doing after?”

“I don’t know.” She blows out a breath. “Endeavour is away so–”

“Then come back here.” He looks at her with a steady gaze. “Just hang out, spend some time away from everything.”

Katsuki grimaces because she doesn’t *want to*. It’s easier to keep herself distracted and shove down the mess of everything around her, focusing on trying to detangle everything from *before* with Best Jeanist on the phone and hope the *now* just decides to solve itself by some fucking *miracle*.

She doesn’t want to stop and risk everything crashing down around her but she knows it isn’t healthy, the way she’s dealing with shit either, making a project out of the Todoroki family and poking and prodding at Endeavour, waiting for him to lash out–

But she never seems to make the best decisions *anyway* so it’s hard to care when it *works*.

Mina and Dabi makes the world feel real in a way that Katsuki still struggles with and being away from them both is screwing with her and she knows it.

And the ice prickles inside of her chest with an unforgiving sort of reminder that something isn’t right but she doesn’t know what it is and she can’t get herself to open her mouth about it.

"I miss U.A.," Katsuki admits in an undertone, averting her eyes from Shinsou's as his head jerks up. "I'm not- I'm *trying* to deal with shit but what am I even doing, Shinsou?" she asks tiredly. "I'm so far in over my head that it's a fucking laugh. This isn't even my world and I'm just-" She gestures with a helpless sort of frustration because-

She's a Hero, somehow, but she sure doesn't fucking feel like one and it hadn't been the solution she'd thought it to be, had it? She's stuck working with a man that she hates, his parents won't talk to her, she can't see Dabi or Himiko and Mina is at U.A. where she can't return and-

"You have us," Shinsou says quietly, leaning forward, his hand firm around her wrist. "And this *is* your world. You have just as much of a right to it as any of us."

"Sure doesn't feel like it." She offers him a humourless grin full of teeth.

"Everyone who came along to rescue you knows about you and-" Shinsou's voice lowers. "Dabi and that girl Toga." His eyes searches hers as she reluctantly meets them. "Maybe we're young in your eyes but you can talk to us – me and Mina. There might be a lot of things you *can't* talk about but there is a lot you *can*."

"They're *Villains*, Shinsou. And you and Mina are becoming *Heroes*."

"There must be a reason why you like them, right?" He cocks his head. "But you don't have anyone to talk about it with. I know they're Villains but they're also more than that to you so – *talk*. You don't have to share anything incriminating, you know? But I don't even know how you met them in the first place. There's bound to be a story there."

Katsuki snaps her teeth. "Gossip."

His mouth tips up. "You can't tell me you haven't been *itching* to share. He was quite handsome, if you're into scars, which is clearly a kink of yours."

She gives him a dry look.

"I'm just saying – what do you have to lose? Spend the night here, I'm sure no-one will mind, and we can talk about cute boys and pretty girls." The bags is dark and heavy beneath his eyes and his smile is an eerie thing.

“Yeah, sure, why not,” she says, unable to muster a proper argument and tugging her hand free as the burn of her skin became too much, and he relinquishes it, slumping back in the bean chair and turning his head to peer behind her.

“Morning, Mina.”

Katsuki jerks around, finding golden eyes in a back drop of black, and tension she hadn't even been aware of unwires from inside of her as she drinks the sight of messy pink curls against skin just an inch darker.

Clad in jeans, a white t-shirt and oversized bright jacket Mina folds her hands behind her back, tilting her head with a smile.

“Morning!”

Chapter End Notes

Katsuki: *does not want to get involved in shit*

Said shit: *jaws theme intensifies*

Heya and welcome back to another chapter of this! I absolutely meant to make this chapter what happens the next chapter but, what do ya know, sometimes the plot makes more sense turned differently and I have so much planned that needs to be dealt with as we approach the next arc of the manga.

Katsuki has been doing real well in trying to distract herself but there's a lot of stuff that she's not allowing herself to fully process and everything is a bit of a mess as usual. Distractions can be good but they can also be dangerous because it doesn't make things go away. And she's handling a lot with just trying to sort out the fact that she was murdered, losing everything to someone she trusted and losing more than she wants to admit, and well - learning to cope isn't easy when there's very little security or control to be grasped at.

It's frankly rather amazing she's functioning as well as she is.

I've been away on vacation and my internet has been a bit crappy so I haven't really managed to respond to comments but I'll make some time tomorrow. You're all so very lovely so - cheers and much love.

I'm artsy-death on tumblr and this has been chapter 63? Yeah.
Huh. What do ya know. We're making some progress here.

I hope you enjoyed!

Moments Like These

Chapter Notes

Mini Might = Midoriya

《Hello》 = sign-language

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

”You’re not going to tell me anything?”

“Nope.”

“Not even a *hint*?” Mina presses.

“Not a single fucking thing,” Katsuki hums, slanting an amused look at the other. “You’ll like it. I think.”

Gift giving and surprises had never been Katsuki’s forte but she’d put some actual damn thought into the entire thing and she’s reasonably confident Mina will enjoy it.

It makes something funny squirm inside of her – anticipation and *more*. She likes seeing Mina smile, loves her laughter, the freedom and joy that glitters in her eyes when she’s completely enraptured.

She finds her mouth quirking up as she takes in the badly hidden impatience and curiosity in those golden eyes that turn to peer out the window.

At the front of the car All Might is blessedly silent and Katsuki forces herself to ignore the blue eyes that flicker up to peer through the backseat mirror.

She’s going to murder Aizawa for putting her in this situation when he’d *promised her*-

But she grasps for that anger and it sucks out of her like a sucker punch because why had she even believed him in the first place? She’s not in his class anymore and he could make all the fancy promises he wanted and it had just meant jack shit, hadn’t it?

She hates it and she loathes the embarrassment that curls inside of her chest for having showed herself weak to him.

It's how the world goes, Katsuki thinks with a curl of her mouth. *Can't trust anyone-*

"Have Best Jeanist called you back yet?" Mina asks finally, turning towards her and giving her seat belt a small tug where to adjust it away from her collarbone.

"I gave him your number," Katsuki admits, giving herself a mental shake. "He said he remembered you from while I was with the League and wanted to call you up himself?" She shrugs.

Mina stares at her.

"You did what now?" she squeaks. "And you didn't seem it fit to tell me one the Japan's top Heroes have my personal phone number!?"

"It's just a popularity ranking," Katsuki says dryly. "And he said you should be the first to know anyway and I wasn't about to argue with that. He did seem pretty sure he had someone last time I spoke with him though." Her mouth quirks. "Suppose you'll have to inform me when you know."

"I'm just trying to think of anyone Best Jeanist might know and-" Mina presses her hands together in front of her mouth, excitement clear. "I can't wait. I really liked my internship so I'm glad I'm not missing out on this." She lowers her hands. "Speaking of working with Heroes – any progress with Endeavour?"

"Eh. He'll have to take me out eventually." Katsuki grimaces. "I did spent a day with Hawks and he did sorta imply we'd do that again so I have that going for me apparently."

"Are you casually flexing on all of us poor Heroes to be?" Mina kicks her feet out, as much as the space of the car allows. "Best Jeanist, Hawks, Endeavour – Japan's three top Heroes just a phone call away."

"Might change with the next ranking." Katsuki slumps back. "They're all weirdoes. I wonder if it's a society thing."

"You're a bit weird too," Mina muses with a grin as Katsuki rolls her head towards her with a flat look. "Good company and all that," she teases before her eyes widens. "Oh! I didn't tell you about the Big Three, did I?"

"You and Shinsou both mentioned them." Katsuki scratches absently at her neck before catching herself with a grimace *because of all the*

fucking habits to pick up on. “They must have made quite the impression.”

“They *did*,” Mina agrees, nodding feverishly before pausing. “Well, mostly one of them I guess? We didn’t get to see what the other two could do. So – picture this.” Mina turns towards her, as much as the seatbelt would allow her. “There’s this guy, he’s a third year, Togata Mirio. Blonde, blue eyes, pretty solidly muscular but a bit of a loud mouth and airhead so first impression wasn’t that impressive, you know? We’re all confident we can take him when he says he’ll be going up against all of us-“

“And then he wiped the floor with you and brought you all back down to earth.” Katsuki’s lips draws back. “Just when you were all getting comfortable with your powers and surviving a term. Aizawa knows how to make a point, I’ll give him that.”

Mina pouts at her. “No need to rub it in.” She presses her index finger against her mouth. “It was pretty cool though. His quirk allows him to go through things so he’d just *disappear* and then launch out somewhere else? It made it impossible to predict where he would appear. I think Midoriya was the only one who managed to react at all. The rest of us didn’t stand a chance.”

“You shouldn’t be too hard on yourself, young Ashido,” All Might says at the front and Katsuki tenses, mouth curling. “He’s been working part-time under Sir Nighteye and has for some time now. He only has a few months to graduation and will then be a full-time Pro-Hero.”

“Aizawa-sensei said the same,” Mina nods, brow furrowing thoughtfully. “Apparently Togata-senpai is thought to be one of the closest to claiming the Number One spot after you.”

All Might coughs, grasping to press a napkin against his mouth. “Indeed,” he says after a moment and Katsuki glances up at the odd tone his voice, momentarily meeting blue eyes with a flattening of her lips. “After Endeavour, of course,” he tacks on and Katsuki wonders if he believes it or not but can’t make a judgement as he focuses back on the road.

So there had been someone other than Mini Might who could have inherited his power? Someone older and who worked with Sir Nighteye? No wonder the guy had pressed her about it when she met him in Nedzu’s office.

She can’t decide what to feel about it. Mini Might is young, yes, and

his adoration of All Might and all things Heroics aren't exactly *healthy*. But she also wouldn't want to be quirkless in this world – she *understands* why Mini Might would latch onto such an opportunity when offered to him, consequences be damned.

It's bullshit. But the suicide statistics among quirkless are fucking high for a reason and she has eight years of memories to back up how absolutely *pitiful* the reaction Mini Might had faced in reaction to his quirklessness. Bullying, teachers turning their eyes as the boy left burn marks on his skin, his dreams spat on-

Her quirk had terrified the *fuck* out of her when she worst woke up in this world but she had fought and clawed to make it her own and in a world of terrifying powers she isn't helpless and there's a horrible sort of relief in that.

Statistically around twenty percent of this world are quirkless, the overwhelming majority of them old and knocking on death's door. Mini Might had been an oddity – born to parents who both had quirks but not inheriting any of his own.

Would it have been *fair* of All Might to give his quirk to someone who already had one when there were those like Mini Might out there?

It's something she hadn't really considered, wrapped up in her own issues. But honestly, everything considered All Might still isn't doing enough by Mini Might.

Teacher material he's not. It's not fucking *normal* for a sixteen-year-old to blow his fucking arms off in a self-sacrificial play that would get him killed sooner rather than later if he didn't get himself a wake-up call of the ages.

And had someone *spoken* to Mini Might about that anyway? It's all shitty secrets but he'd gone from being bullied over being quirkless to getting one and that wasn't a fucking fix-all for years of crap.

Katsuki will bet on that being a very blatant and obvious *no*.

A finger presses against her cheek.

"You're frowning."

"Just thinking," she grumbles as Mina raises an eyebrow. "I have something for you," Katsuki says with a glance out the window to confirm that they were nearing the destination before looking back at

the other.

“Something for me?” Mina blinks, and then her eyes widens. “Like a *present*? Something you bought all for me?”

“Yeah.” Katsuki ducks her head. “Look, I’m not the best with words, alright? But I missed your birthday and I felt shitty about that. So.” Katsuki shoves her hand down the inside of her pocket, hand curling around the small package. “This trip is my treat and I got you this.”

She presents the small square package a bit awkwardly – wrapped in pink with a purple messy bow because it had felt appropriate. She hadn’t bothered with a card, it had felt odd trying to write something out on the one she had bought and it had, ultimately, ended up in the trash, pages blank.

Mina’s hand presses against her mouth and it takes Katsuki a second to realise that she’s smiling, mouth stretching soft behind her fingers.

“You didn’t need to do that, Katsuki. I didn’t blame you-“

“Yeah, well, I blamed myself,” Katsuki interrupts. “You’re my friend, alright? And you were there for my birthday. It’s only fair that we celebrate yours properly.”

“So this whole trip-“

“Just open the present.” Katsuki shoves it at her and Mina grins as she takes it.

“You’re such a softie,” the other coos, thumbs smoothing down over the small square shape, pressing curiously against it as if its shape would miraculously reveal the inside of it.

“You’re making me second guess all my decisions,” Katsuki mutters, ears burning. “Please just open it.”

“No, no – I gotta savor this.” Mina grins at her. “I didn’t know it was my *birthday* we were celebrating! If I’d known I’d have- have.” Her mouth curls thoughtfully. “Well, I don’t know what I would have done but-“

“Mina.”

“- worn a cute skirt or-“

“*Mina.*”

Mina's eyes glitters prettily, clearly amused. "I'm just teasing you." She slips a thumb under the wrapping, sliding off the edge and flipping it around to tear the wrapping open before pausing. "Wait, where are we going anyway? You're paying for something? I thought we were maybe going to a park for ice cream or something--"

"Just open the damn package or I'm throwing it out the fucking window."

"You wouldn't--"

Katsuki's seat belt clicks open with a press of her thumb and Mina's eyes widens, squawking out in protest as Katsuki lurched towards her, hand circling her wrist, Mina's fingers clenching tight as her other hand pressed up against her chest, curling to get a foot up beside it and Katsuki finds herself pinned up against the front passenger seat, her lips curled fiendishly.

"Hey – seat belts on, please-!" All Might protests.

"*Katsuki*," Mina strains out. "Kindly seat yourself down and I'll open the present."

"Promise?" Katsuki presses, relaxing her muscles and baring her teeth in amusement as Mina squeaked as more of her weight was levelled against her.

"I promise!" Mina wiggles down and Katsuki allows her to push her off, dropping back to her seat with an expectant eyebrow and the younger one's mouth twitches. "You're ridiculous. And heavy."

But she does tear the last bit of paper off, blinking as she turned the simple black box around before curling her fingers around and cracking it open as Katsuki shoves her belt back in place.

"A bracelet?" Mina carefully extracts a simple black band, turning it curiously.

"It's a charm bracelet." Katsuki says awkwardly, reaching back into her inside pocket and to the very bottom, carefully extracting the two beads there and pulling them out. "I got you two but I know you like switching stuff up so you can add and remove as you wish." She offers the two beads up.

Mina blinks, staring at them, and then her eyes widens up and Katsuki's cheeks burns red.

“Katsuki-“

“Don’t-“

“You got us *friendship beads*.” Mina grins and Katsuki flushes darker as she carefully accepts them. “One for me and one for you.” Her golden eyes lingers, considering her for a moment before clasping the side of one of the beads open and securing it onto the bracelet and slipping it around her wrist with a deft twist. “But you know, you’ve really misunderstood the whole friendship bracelet thing, Katsuki – did you know?”

“Misunderstood?” Katsuki echoes with a furrow of her brow.

Mina smiles indulgently. “Come here, lean forward.”

“Why?” Katsuki asks suspiciously.

But she does as told, bending towards the other, blinking as her face was carefully framed and turned, her eyes landing somewhere on the leather seat to avoid looking at All Might.

“Well.” A thumb drags across the metal bar in her ear. “If you’d bought one of those necklaces there would have been a split heart, right? And best friends wear a piece each.” A click registering after a tug of her ear and Mina gives her winning grin as Katsuki slowly leans back, pressing a hand up against the bar to find the bead clinging to it. “So – there. Alien for you, bomb for me.” Mina says warmly, eyes creasing with her smile.

-

“Is this really necessary?” Katsuki carefully grasps Mina’s hands, helping her out of the car with her eyes closed and Katsuki’s headphones over her ears, turned on max to cut out all sound. “What could *sound* really reveal about it?” There’s bubbling curiosity in her voice.

A *lot*, Katsuki thinks with some humours as she kicks the car door shut.

“I have a ticket for you too,” she informs All Might shortly. “And there’s a cap in my backpack if you want to go incognito.”

“Ah.” He offers her an awkward smile. “Thank you, Touya-san.”

She ends up borrowing All Might one of her spare hoodies too and it sits odd on his tall lanky frame, blond bangs getting tucked into the cap secured to his head. She eyes him and finally throws a scarf at him because he still looks like a wind will do him over.

It's a warm autumn day, which Katsuki appreciates as she tugs Mina along, one hand curled around her bicep to make sure she didn't trip over anything as she took them through the pre-paid line, Mina all but buzzing with anticipation beside her.

"Have a good day, sir!" The brightly grinning park greeter says with a wave as Katsuki accepts the bands.

"Ah, she's not--"

"Thank you," Katsuki interrupts All Might with a forced smile before nudging Mina forward.

"Why--"

"Because if we're going to be correcting every stranger who misgender me we're going to be here for a long fucking time," Katsuki says with some exasperation. "They're strangers, I'll never see them again, they'll never think of me and I won't think of them. Their opinions don't *matter*." She scans through the crowd, finding a good spot in the middle of it all before turning firmly to the former Hero. "Look, you have to be here because things are a bit fucked at the moment but I'd appreciate it if I could just pretend you aren't here. You don't like me, I don't like you." She meets vivid blue eyes in a hollow face. "Fair?"

"I don't dislike you, Touya-san." All Might lowers his head with a small inclination of his head. "I will respect your wishes, however. I am here on behalf of U.A. to make sure you both get home safe and sound."

"Sure you are," Katsuki breathes as he steps back and she focuses back on Mina, just a bit shorter than she remembers and she realises with a bit of an odd twist that she must have had a growth spurt again.

Mina's head is craned as if to strain for just a tiny bit of sound, a single hint, even as her eyes remained closed. Katsuki tugs the closer, turning her carefully with her back towards her chest and reaches to place her hands over the headphones to lift the right one an inch.

"Ready?"

"Ready!" Mina agrees too loudly and Katsuki huffs in amusement

before dragging them down and off, slipping them back around her own neck.

“Katsuki?” She leans forward to rest her chin on top of Mina’s head, mouth tipping up with amusement at the faint voice of the other. “Are we at-?”

Bright colours and bright lights, large statues and Hero-inspired rides with grinning mouths, winks and statuesque flexing of heavy muscles. Stalls with what in her world would have been ring tosses and simple darts had been replaced with inspirational look-alikes connected to different Heroes and their attacks and there’s a *Villain’s Lair* instead of a Haunted House rising like a dark shadow behind it all.

Cotton candy in ridiculous hair-like shapes balances precariously in sticks, slogans painted on walls in bright static colours, stalls brimming with Hero merchandise with everything from bags of candy to t-shirts, giant stuffed toys, t-shirts and jewelry.

Over their heads people scream as they spiral down in an All Might themed rollercoaster with laughter and voices joining together from people moving in tight flocks around them.

“Welcome,” Katsuki murmurs as a Mina reaches blindly to grasp at her hand with a tight grip and a squeeze, “to Japan’s largest Hero themed amusement park.”

-

Amélie had loved amusement parks.

Katsuki hasn’t been to one in this world. She finds them too loud, too crowded, people too close, the strangeness of it all a bit too in the face for her to want to and when she’d been younger they had terrified her.

She hadn’t particularly appreciated being short with nitroglycerin sweating out of her palms and a control that came and went even as she scrabbled desperately to hold onto it. She’d gotten used to looking at people in the face when she spoke with them and it had been off-putting as *fuck* to have adults bend down or even *kneel* to put them on her level.

But she finds that it’s easy to get swept up in Mina’s excitement and let the rest of the world come second place as they are carried high, high, high into the sky in the hands of Mt. Lady, feet dangling, before being abruptly dropped with their stomachs swooping and hands

squeezing tight.

Mina's eyes are bright, her mouth moving a mile a minute, tugging and dragging her along to anything that catches her attention and Katsuki isn't blind to the way the other makes sure to shoulder others out of their path while keeping her away from the worst of it.

She looks at Mina and wonders if she's even aware of doing it and then wonders in turn what it says about both of them.

-

Katsuki rolls her tense shoulders, rubbing at her ear with a grimace as people scream noisily with the twist of a rollercoaster spiralling into a loop above the queue.

Mina, ever watchful, catches the motion. "You can put on your headphones if it's getting too much," she says, stretching her arms up above her head as Katsuki glances at her. "I know enough signs to get by if you need a break from the noise."

"You sure?" Katsuki checks, fingers brushing the hard shell of her headphones. "I don't mind-"

But Mina takes a step towards her and Katsuki stills as her hands grasps them and drags them up, securing and twisting the dial on the side of it and Katsuki breathes out with a whoosh as the noise abruptly cut off, her eyes closing because-

Yeah, it had had been getting a bit too much.

She opens her eyes.

《Better?》 Mina asks.

Katsuki drags four fingers against her palm from her chin in a thumbs-up and Mina grins.

-

"We should win something for Hitoshi," Mina says excitedly as they're wandering down a street filled with different sort of games. "But what to get him..." She scans through the crowd, clearly on the hunt for the perfect gift.

"Are there any animals he likes?" Katsuki wonders, scratching absently at her neck.

"I think he likes cats," Mina hums. "Apparently Aizawa-sensei has *two*, did you know?"

"I did not," Katsuki admits. "But I've only been at their apartment twice." She glances at the closest stall and then twitches, tugging Mina to the right and away from the bright flaming plushies with #1 stamped on their chest. "It's too bad they don't make Eraserhead ones," she mutters and then nearly chokes as she catches sight of one with killer waves crammed into human clothing. "I almost want one." She stares because *the daring-*

"What about a Present Mic one?" Mina suggests. "He's pretty popular." Mina points to a stall with small Present Mic plushies and headphones with his head grinning on the sides of them.

"We can get more than one thing?" Katsuki says with a shrug. "The games don't look all that difficult."

"Maybe one for each of them." Mina halts. "A black cat for Aizawa-sensei and we can get it a white scarf! And one of the Present Mic plushies – the biggest they have! And Midnight-sensei..." Her head darts around, pressing up on her tip-toes to scan around them.

Katsuki had seen Midnight among the Heroes on body pillows but she's fairly certain Shinsou would murder them both so she keeps her mouth shut.

"A t-shirt? I know she has some merch..." Mina frowns.

Most of Midnight's merch are heavily sexualised so Katsuki understands her trouble. Midnight owed it but it wasn't really something she imagined a sixteen-year-old wanting of someone that had taken some form of parental role to him.

"You know, Present Mic looks a bit like a cockatoo if you wanna do the animal theme." Katsuki tips her head towards a stall of bright exotic bird plushies and a game with suspiciously red feathered darts. "Get a pair of headphones for it and you have a small Present Mic. And they're sure to have some handcuffs and maybe Midnight's face mask down at the merch shop."

Mina mulls that over. "That could work. Oh! Maybe a fox for Midnight-sensei? Or something feline... but there's already a cat for Aizawa-sensei..."

"With his bags you can just a wrap a scarf around a panda," Katsuki

mutter. “And a tiny purple one for Shinsou.” Because Shinsou had really taken a shine to Aizawa judging by his recent style change.

“Katsuki?”

“What?”

“You’re a *genius*.”

-

They probably spend an hour on Shinsou’s gifts and Mina is grinning, legs swinging as she bites down on a fluffy cloud of white bunny-shaped cotton candy as the sky is darkening above them.

Katsuki stares at the small purple panda with a scarf wrapped around its neck and then at the larger black and white panda beside it in identical get-up. After some consideration they’d settled on a panther for Midnight, its legs a bit stiff to keep it in a sitting position, mask taped in place and a handcuff around its neck like a collar, the other dangling.

The bright yellow cockatoo sits between its legs and they’d made a collar out of the headphones by wrapping the cord around its neck and making a slanting bow on the side.

“He’s going to love them.”

“He’s going to kill us.”

They exchange looks and Katsuki huffs in amusement as Mina giggles.

“We did good though, the likeness is striking.”

“Aizawa is going to give you hell.” Katsuki reaches out to snag some cotton candy, squishing it together before popping it into her mouth, tongue swiping out against her thumb to catch the sticky sugar there.

“It’ll be worth it though,” Mina says contently. “And hopefully I’ll be far away on my Hero-Work Studies before they see them.”

Katsuki considers the blank button eyes of the large panda and snorts.

“You don’t want to get something for yourself?” she asks as she checks her phone. “We have some twenty minutes left.”

“I’m good,” Mina tilts her head to look at her with a smile. “I already

got my present and I had so much fun today.”

“Good,” Katsuki says and she means it, snagging another bite of cotton candy as Mina leans it towards her.

“I missed hanging out, just the two of us,” Mina murmurs, tilting to rest her head on Katsuki’s shoulder. “It isn’t the same at U.A. without you there.”

Katsuki can’t feel guilty about it – not when her inaction could have meant so much worse for Dabi. But she feels something all the same as she looks at the pink curls of the younger and it settles strange and heavy inside of her.

Actions and consequences.

She can hate the result of it but she can’t regret what led to it, glaring as the scar on Endeavour’s face is, a constant reminder.

“I’ve missed it too,” she admits, pinching off one of the eaten-around ears which was starting to look a bit sad where it dangled.

“What are you going to do after your year is up, you think?” Mina wonders. “I mean – you’ll officially be a Pro-Hero, won’t you?”

“Dunno.” Katsuki frowns. “I’m not old enough to open my own business so if I keep being a Hero I’ll have to get someone to take me in.”

Katsuki doesn’t particularly like thinking about it. She wouldn’t have an income or place to stay and with her body being seventeen she wouldn’t have a lot to pick from. She’d graduated U.A. but also *not* which meant her grades were a bit fucked until she got them sorted through online courses or the like which made her tired just thinking about it.

Hawks had opened his office at eighteen, the youngest to do so, but Katsuki can’t say if the idea really appeals to her or not.

Can’t even say if she’ll keep being a Hero if given a choice.

“Best Jeanist?”

“He’d probably do it,” she says after a moment. “He said he would have offered me a spot for the Hero Work-Studies if I’d still been at U.A..”

“He likes you,” Mina says, warm and content beside her, her scent acidic where it fills Katsuki’s nose with every breath. “He was very worried about you when you were kidnapped. I bet he’d let you stay with him if you asked. Or Aizawa-sensei!” Mina turns her head with warmth in her golden gaze. “And if that doesn’t work out you and I can just get an apartment together. Nothing says I *have* to stay at the dorms.”

“We could, huh?” Katsuki’s mouth tips up at the corner. “I’ll keep that in mind.”

-

“We should be heading back-“

“Ten more minutes,” Katsuki tightens her grip on Mina’s hand. “It’s almost nine just – give us ten more minutes.”

All Might meets her gaze steadily and she struggles not to curl on herself, her heart pounding hard inside her chest.

“The world won’t end,” she presses. “Just-“

“Ten minutes.” All Might sighs and then coughs with a grimace as he swallowed the blood in his mouth. “Aizawa won’t be too happy with me if we get back much later than that.”

Katsuki turns to Mina. “Get up on my shoulders.”

Mina blinks.

“What-?”

“Just – trust me,” Katsuki presses, glancing towards the sky and then at Mina. “You’ll like this.”

“Well, when you put it like that...” Mina turns and unashamedly hauls herself up on the table. “Can you keep an eye on the plushies?” she asks of All Might.

“Of course,” he agrees as Katsuki drags her headphones off and stuffs them down her backpack before hauling it in place.

Mina takes a step forward, sliding her leg over Katsuki’s shoulder and she reaches up to steady her as she plops down, muscles clenching and hands sliding into her hair, tightening as Katsuki made sure she was seated properly, fingers curled around her thighs.

“Good?” Katsuki checks.

“Perfect,” Mina agrees. “Now – what are we doing?”

“Surprise.”

“Lots of those today,” Mina hums, swaying with the rhythm of her walking as Katsuki steered them through the thinning crowd until they reached the harbour, planks clacking beneath the press of her sneakers.

There are already people gathering up at the wooden fence, leaning and talking comfortably against it, and Mina straightens up as Katsuki halts in the midst of it.

There’s a buzz in the air, a curl of anticipation that is unmistakable as parents haul their children onto their shoulders with ice creams and cotton candy sticky in their hands.

On her shoulders Mina remains strangely silent, peering curiously around them, fingers fiddling a big absently with Katsuki's hair.

And as the clock strikes nine silence stretches for but a moment before there’s a whistle, rockets shooting up high above them before exploding in a shower of bright colourful sparks and Mina’s breathe hitches above her.

“Fireworks,” she whispers with wonder.

More and more follows, painting the sky in a brilliant field of colours and shapes, the explosions muffled from Mina’s thighs pressing against her ears as the girl stretched her arms wide above her, grinning bright and free as Katsuki slowly turns them both around.

And she watches, head tilted back and a soft smile on her lips as the bright colours reflect against her friend's pink skin in the back drop of a dark sky.

“Happy birthday, Mina.”

Chapter End Notes

I've had this chapter planned for I don't know how long now? But it was so *freeing* to finally give Mina and Katsuki this moment together.

Happy Birthday, indeed.

All Might and Katsuki's relationship has really gone topsy-turvy from a myriad of reasons and I can only sigh because there's *a lot* there.

Next chapter - Katsuki sleeps over at U.A. and we hit something that has been a long-time coming I do believe?

I'm packing to go to work a week so been busier than expected and I wanted to get this out before leaving so cheers to all of you brilliant people and much love < 3

I'm artsy-death on tumblr if you wanna say hi there and this has been chapter 64 of In The End.

I hope you enjoyed!

Sleepover

Chapter Notes

Shitty Hair = Kirishima
Featherhead = Tokoyami
Ponytail = Yaoyorozu
Round Cheeks = Uraraka
Froggy = Asui

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

”- I think the Mt. Lady one was my favourite? I don’t think I’ve ever been that high up before and that *wait* before the drop just – *swoosh* and then immediate halt and-“

“You’re late.”

Katsuki tenses, mouth flattening as she slants a look towards the tired Underground Hero as he steps out of the shadows, his gaze on All Might who had been slowly trailing along behind them.

Mina shoves the plushies behind her back with an innocent smile as he glances momentarily to her, the limbs of them sticking up haphazardly and panda ears poking up from between pink locks.

“That’s on me,” Katsuki says shortly before the former Symbol of Peace could cough out an excuse. “And it’s barely a few minutes, I’m sure you’ve survived the *long* wait.”

She meets dark eyes, raising her chin as he sighed.

“Of course it was you.” He looks to All Might. “You’re done, you can go. I’ll take over from here. Midoriya was looking for you earlier, I’m sure he’s still awake.” He looks to Mina. “I need a moment with Touya if you don’t mind. I’ll send her in after.”

“I allowed it,” All Might says with a wet swallow.

“It’s about something else,” Aizawa says gruffly.

All Might visibly hesitates before lowering his head in acknowledgement.

Mina’s shoulder bumps against hers. “I’ll prepare a futon for you in

my room,” her friend says with a hesitant smile, sensing the strange tension that had settled over them, before sliding to the side and hurrying to catch up with All Might with a backwards glance.

“My apologies for not meeting you this morning,” Aizawa says after a long moment. “I wouldn’t have sent All Might with you unless I had another choice but most of us have been in a long meeting today. He’s the only one without a proper teaching position so he was excused from it.”

“Shinsou warned me,” Katsuki says shortly, tense and disliking the situation because excuses doesn’t stop the itching beneath her skin or the discomfort and fear that had lurked even as she shoved it down, down, down because today hadn’t been about *her* but *Mina* and-

Katsuki had done her best but she loathes that she’d been put in the position in the first place.

“You’re angry at me.”

“I’m not,” Katsuki bites out because it’s not anger she feels but embarrassment for having put some semblance of trust to his words and a self-loathing and nagging justification for the parts of her that knows *better*. “I’m not one of your students anymore.” She gives him a smile that is more teeth than polite. “You don’t have to justify yourself to me.”

“I still made a promise to you. That you’re not one of my students doesn’t exempt me from the fact that I know your relationship with All Might is bad.” His eyes lingers on her, dark and searching. “I told him to give you space.”

“He did.”

“Good.” Aizawa takes a step towards her but stops when Katsuki’s shoulders bunches tight, a strange look settling momentarily before he breathed out. “Shinsou told me that you looked unsettled this morning. If there’s anything you want to talk about-“

“I’m *fine*,” Katsuki interrupts. “There’s *nothing*.”

“Then why is it,” he says slowly. “That I don’t believe you when you say that?”

Because you don’t trust me, Katsuki thinks but does not say as she shoves her hands into her jacket pockets, hand curling around the

phone number there with a tense shrug.

“Touya-“ Aizawa raises his hand and Katsuki jerks a step back. It hovers in the air for a moment before he drags it through his hair. “Things are clearly not fine,” he says finally. “I can’t force you to talk and I *won’t*. But if you want to my door is always open.”

“There is nothing to talk about,” Katsuki says flatly.

“And when that changes my offer stands,” Aizawa says, his voice firm. “And if not me, then *someone*. You’re not on your own in this. I know things are rough for you and that a lot is changing but you’ll always have a place and support here.”

Liar, Katsuki thinks with a curling of her fingers inside her pockets.

-

“You okay?” Mina asks immediately as she steps through the doors.

“Peachy,” Katsuki mutters with a huff of air. “Did you give Shinsou his gifts?”

“He’s in his room, I was waiting for you.” Mina studies her for a moment longer before smiling. “Want to grab some snacks? We can just hang out and talk.”

“Sounds good.” Katsuki rubs absently at her ear as she glances around.

“It’s school day tomorrow so most are already in bed,” Mina informs her, reaching out and snagging her hand with a tug that’s becoming familiar, their hands fitting easily together. “We have Hero Training first thing in the morning. It’s *rough*.”

“I train with Endeavour before breakfast,” Katsuki tells her absently. “And then again after dinner.”

“*Every day?*” Mina demands, golden eyes widening.

“Most,” Katsuki corrects. “Depends a bit on his schedule, I guess.” *And mine.*

“Hey, Ashido, Touya-senpai!” Shitty Hair turns towards them both with a sharkish smile, sharp teeth flashing, apron tied around his waist. “Had fun? I hear you were away all day. There’s been quiet the buzz and speculations going around.”

“Kirishima! You’ll never believe where we’ve been!” Mina releases her hand and Katsuki snorts as Shitty Hair blinks at her pushing into his space, practically buzzing. “You know that large Hero themed amusement park over at-“

Katsuki absently filters their conversation into background noise as she looks around – seeing Round Cheeks and Froggy caught-up in a game of some sort in front of the television, Featherhead reading quietly in a corner and Ponytail with headphones over her ears in front of a pile of papers.

“- no way, that’s insane! Did you ride the-“

“- everything! Did you know there’s even a Red Riot themed one? I know he’s your favourite-“

Katsuki’s nose wrinkles and she peers past Shitty Hair, twitching at the bubbling pot of suspicious looking food.

“Give me that.” She nabs the spatula from his hand. “What are you making anyway?” she grumbles as he blinks at her as she pokes it into the red mess.

“Pasta Pomodoro?”

“Sure you are,” Katsuki mutters. “You’ve already burnt it.”

“I thought it was Iida’s turn to cook today?” Mina asks as Katsuki turns the pan and scrapes it into the trash before washing it clean with a hiss as the cold water hit the pan, the burnt bottom quickly scrubbed clean.

“It was,” Shitty Hair says sheepishly. “But I got caught-up in training and missed it.”

Katsuki deftly peels and chops onion, turning the heat on and pouring a generous dollop of olive oil as she grabbed for a garlic.

“You don’t need to do that, senpai,” Shitty Hair protests as Mina opens up a cabinet to hunt for snacks with a brief amused look her way.

“I’m not cooking the whole thing,” Katsuki snorts, dumping onion and garlic in and grabbing for the hot chili flakes to cover them with. “Fresh or canned tomatoes?”

“Oh! Here-“ Shitty Hair ducks down, pulling one of the cabinets open

and hauling up two packages. "Should I just dump them in or-?"

"Yeah."

"Alright." His thumb hardens, piercing the metal as he deftly twisted it open with a hard turn. "There we go!"

"Handy," Katsuki huffs as he leant over to pour it in. "Your mistake was putting the heat on too high," she telld him as she stirs it all together, adding salt as she went. "Keep stirring every odd minute or so until it thickens, add fresh basil and then pour the pasta in. There's no use trying to rush it, you'll just screw it up."

"Popcorn or cheese, Katsuki?"

"Cheese."

She riffles through the drawers until she finds a small spoon, scooping up a small heaping. "You can add more spice if you want to – salt and pepper is basic. I added chili because it makes a good flavour base." She shoves it at him and instead of taking it he leans forward to taste it as she stares at him.

"That's good," Shitty Hair grins at her. "Is there anything else I can add? I mean the chili flakes are awesome but can I, like, pour some hot sauce in it?"

"What kind do you have?" she asks in interest.

Apparently she'd been spot-on with the chili because he pulls out four different ones from a shelf clearly labeled KIRISHIMA.

"This one would probably be good," she says after a moment of consideration, tapping at the smallest one. "It's hot but also sweeter than the others. This one-" She pokes the black jar. "Should be nice with meat - it's a bit smoky, right?"

"Yeah, I usually dip barbecue chips in it," Shitty Hair considers them. "So, like a hot marinade? Which one would be better for chicken?"

"Depends on what you're having it with. Just chicken? It's whatever. But the sweeter ones might go better with fries for example - it goes in line with the same flavour profile as ketchup, just hotter."

"I'll give it a spin." Shitty Hair grins, eyes bright as he turned to Katsuki. "Thanks again - I hate missing out on a proper dinner so this

was a life-saver."

"It's basic cooking," Katsuki mutters, shoving the spatula at him. "Stir or you'll burn it again. And the pasta is almost done so just pour out the water, pour some oil or butter in and let it sit until you need to add it. I'd wait until the tomatoes have boiled down properly before adding any chili sauce."

"Aye, aye!" He mock salutes her to a dry look.

"That smells good," Mina says with clear amusement as she carried over a plate with different cheeses, grapes and a large bottle of water tucked under her arm, glasses pinched between her fingers. "We've been taking turns cooking and Kirishima here has been banned."

Katsuki frowns. "You won't learn if you don't *try*."

"No one wants to suffer through another burnt meal," Mina shrugs with an apologetic look.

"Hey, man, it's cool – I know I'm not very good at it." Shitty Hair scratches at the back of his neck with an embarrassed smile. "I was usually in charge of looking after my siblings while my parents cooked so I never learned. It's a bummer but not much I can do about it."

"Is anyone here good at cooking?" Katsuki asks, reaching out to turn the heat down a smidge *just in case*.

"Ojiro is probably the best," Mina hums. "Koda makes some mean vegetarian dishes and Iida can make basic stuff but he's not very good. He and Midoriya usually teams up since he's pretty good at it but easily distracted while Iida is... Iida. Sato bakes so he's been exempt but Tokoyami has been pretty reliable for basic Japanese food. Oh! And Ochako too! I don't think Yaomomo has ever cooked a single dish in her life but she makes some mean tea."

"You make some good stuff too, Ashido," Shitty Hair pipes in, stirring at Katsuki's meaningful look. "And Aoyama makes those fancy French dishes."

"You should watch as others cook," Katsuki says after a moment. "Just simple stuff, don't overdo it and you'll slowly start getting a hang of it. If you like hot food then work with that - it's a flavour profile you're familiar with."

"Is that how you learned?" Shitty Hair asks curiously and Katsuki's

mouth curls but there's a genuine sort of tone to his voice and she doesn't see the harm.

"Mom was pretty traditional when it came to some stuff," she tells him. "She wanted me to learn from an early age so I was helping out in the kitchen from the moment I was tall enough to reach."

Her mother's bad days had been more than her good ones so it hadn't been often but Amélie had treasured those moments together.

She hadn't been close to her parents, not really, there's a reason she moves out as early as she does. But that doesn't mean she hadn't loved them, complicated as things had been, her mother haunted and her father doing his best to be there for his wife.

They had done their best to be there for her as well but her mother had blamed herself for a lot of things when it came to her daughter and it had driven a wedge between them when she got older.

A protective but not very warm love that had been both tangled and difficult.

"Hey, senpai, you okay?"

Katsuki gives a small jerk, looking up to find two pair of eyes looking at her with worry and she grimaces.

"s nothing."

"It's okay to admit you miss them, you know?" Mina says, bumping her shoulder gently against hers. "I'd miss my parents if I were to, you know-"

"Die," Katsuki says flatly and Mina's mouth dips. "Yeah, I know." She looks to Shitty Hair. "What kind of training were you doing anyway?"

Shitty Hair flashes sharp teeth, placing a hand on his hip.

"Strengthening!" he says proudly. "Aizawa-sensei theorized that if I have a more solid muscle profile I might be able to push my quirk even further. So I'm doing a lot of lifting and stuff, ya know? It's fun! Uraraka and I try to spot each other when we can and Sato and Shoji join us two out of three times."

"You hang out in the D-wing, right?" Mina asks curiously. "I'm mostly in the B-wing."

“Yep!” Shitty Hair stirs the tomatoes around, bubbling and sizzling and slowly turning into a proper red sauce. “You should come to the D-wing sometime, Ashido. We’ve got a small competition going. No pressure, and Shoji or Sato tends to win anyway, but it’s pretty great.”

“Maybe,” Mina hums. “I mostly train with Hitoshi at the moment – he’s gotten damn tricky to go up against.”

“He’s really been taking after Aizawa-sensei,” Shitty Hair says, hand dragging through his hair “I barely scraped by that win during Thursday-training. If I didn’t know about his quirk I’d have lost pretty solidly.” He grins. “Maybe I should be the one joining up with you in the B-wing.”

“You should!” Mina says enthusiastically, perking up. “I think Kaminari was pretty interested in joining too so that would make an even four of us-”

“Oh! Touya!” Katsuki blinks, turning around only to find herself stumbling back as someone collided with her with *far too much enthusiasm*, arms wrapping tight around her own in a quick squeeze before releasing her before her muscles could do much more than ripple in surprise. “I haven’t seen you in *forever!*”

“Hagakure.” Katsuki stares into the empty space, no gloves or clothes in sight. “It’s only been like a week,” she says dryly, hands slipping into her pockets, not quite sure what to feel about the sorta hug as her brain frazzled a bit anxiously. “Been training?” she asks distractedly.

“Yes!” Hagakure’s voice is close. “I was out for a run. They’ve figured out how to even make my earphones invisible, isn’t that just the coolest? And I have a new pouch that can be hooked to my belt where I can keep my phone and stuff!” There’s a vibrant sort of excitement in her voice that Katsuki huffs to because it’s fucking *endearing*.

“That’s good.”

“I’ve been meaning to call you but then I thought that you must have been *really* busy considering it’s your first week as a Pro-Hero and all! You look good, though. No broken bones or anything.” She can’t see the other but the grin is pretty damn clear from the way her voice rises.

“I’m not that bad.” Katsuki grumps as she drags a hand through her hair, feeling weirdly awkward and not quite understanding why. “About the training, right?”

"If you're still up for it." Hagakure's hand claps together. "I'll be doing class like normal so whenever suits you is fine."

"I'll check but a Sunday works the best for me."

"Then a Sunday it is," Hagakure says without missing a beat. "It can be like my one day Hero-work training considering you are one and all! I wonder if I can get Aizawa-sensei to make it official..."

Katsuki snorts. "Sure, you can think of it like that if you want."

"You two gonna be training together?" Shitty Hair asks, looking between them, Mina a bit wide-eyed behind his shoulder.

"Yeah! Touya-senpai promised she'd look over my style." Hagakure claps a hand on her shoulder and Katsuki twitches. "She helped me out before and it was great so – I asked and she agreed."

"At Endeavour's place?" Mina wonders, looking at her, and Katsuki raises an eyebrow back.

"Yep!" Hagakure agrees.

"He has a pretty good training area," Katsuki says with a shrug.

"That sounds fun!" Mina grins at her. "I'm glad you're being social."

"... What's that supposed to mean." Katsuki narrows her eyes at her.

"Nothing!" Mina steps past Shitty Hair. "Here, you take this-" She shoves the cheese, cups and water bottle at Katsuki. "And I'll grab Hitoshi's present!"

"I'll give you a call in the week!" Hagakure says happily and Katsuki strongly suspects she might be waving.

"Yeah, yeah."

"Night, senpai! Ashido!"

-

"Sounds like you had fun," Shinsou hums, chin resting on top of the large plush Aizawa panda, arms lazily wrapped around it in a half-hug. "I'm impressed, you actually put some thought into it."

"See if I ever do something for your birthday," Katsuki mutters,

sprawled out on her back on the floor with her head resting just shy of touching against Mina's thigh.

"Too late, you already did."

"That's all Mina."

"She lies." Mina pops a cube of cheese into her mouth. "It was Katsuki's suggestion to dress them up."

"I'm sure Aizawa-sensei is going to be delighted by the comparison." A pause of consideration. "Yamada sure will be. He likes anything with bright colours." He nudges a foot up against the colourful cockatoo on the floor.

"Does it ever get strange having them as both teachers and guardians?" Mina asks curiously. "I'd get so confused."

"Less than you think, probably," Shinsou answers after a moment. "But we talk about it a lot, I guess? About the fact that they're teachers at school and *whatever* outside of it. It'd be bothersome if it wasn't so damn nice of them." Shinsou's mouth slides down, turning slightly muffled against the plush. "They said I'm allowed to call them what I want but that they won't force anything."

Mina's hands presses against her mouth. "Like, dad and—"

"Yes," Shinsou groans.

"That's so sweet," Mina squeaks. "*Dadzawa*," she breathes a second later, eyes glittering. "Shinsou—"

"I'm not calling him that," he says burrowing his face entirely against the panda plush.

Katsuki bites down on a large bite of cheese, tongue flattening against the roof of her mouth to drag it down as it got stuck.

"How's staying with Endeavour going?" Shinsou asks, clearly a desperate bid for a subject change, and Katsuki grimaces.

"s whatever."

"Lovely," Shinsou mutters. "But at least Shouto's sister is nice." His tone is dry as a desert.

"She's picked up D&D," Katsuki informs him blandly. "And she's

meeting up with friends a lot which is good.”

“You make her sound like a project.” Shinsou drops his chin back on top of the panda plush. “Don’t you think so, Mina? And then there’s that whole Endeavour thing – donating all that *money*.”

“Hitoshi is concerned,” Mina informs her as Katsuki stares at him. “He says you’re trying to distract yourself from thinking about the fact that you’re life has turned upside down.” Mina looks at her with golden eyes and Katsuki slowly swallows her cheese. “He calls it an *unhealthy coping mechanism*.”

“Oh *fuck off*.”

“See, I told you that’s what she’s doing,” Shinsou says dryly and Katsuki twitches. “No denial.”

“I’m handling my shit just fine,” Katsuki grumbles. “I’m *fine*.”

“As long as you know you’re not fooling anybody,” Shinsou says, the fucking *bastard*. “So, you were gonna tell us about how you met Dabi.” His eyes gleams an odd shade of purple in the dark room as Katsuki glowers at him.

“I promised no such thing-“

“Oh! I wanna hear this too!” Mina perks up and Katsuki’s protest chokes off. “And Toga too! You said you met Dabi four years ago, right?”

“... Four and a half.”

“Don’t take this the wrong way, but he wasn’t like, you know, trying to hook-up with you then, was he?” Mina stares down at her. “Because that’s not-“

“It’s a recent development,” Katsuki says flatly. “I wasn’t looking to screw anyone when my body was *twelve*. And he wasn’t either. We didn’t do shit before he knew about me and he was pretty damn relieved about it.”

“Well, that’s something at least,” Shinsou gives her a little toast with a piece of goat cheese before flicking it into his mouth with his thumb.

“So how did you meet?” Mina’s index finger pokes against her forehead. “Did you just happen to cross paths one day and, well-“ Her

finger pokes down against her chest very deliberately.

“.... You’re not wrong.”

“*Unhealthy-*“

“I’ll cram this fucking cheese down your throat, Shinsou.”

“We’re just trying to understand, Katsuki.” Mina shoves her back down as she pushed up and Katsuki bares her teeth. “Stop that!”

“Yeah, stop that,” Shinsou echoes in a flat dry voice.

“Mina-“

“No.”

“Why are you even asking if you’re gonna fucking judge me for it?” Katsuki bites out in frustration. “I wasn’t coping and I wasn’t handling shit *but he helped* and it’s still fucking *helping*. I don’t care if you think it’s fucked up, I know it is, and I don’t give a shit.”

“We’re just concerned, chill.”

“You-“

“Katsuki, we’re trying to *understand*.”

“I *know*,” she snaps, pushing up with a baring of her teeth. “And I also know you fucking *won’t* so leave it the fuck alone!”

“Does it really bother you that much?” Mina asks and Katsuki’s frustration simmers and curls inside of her as she meets golden eyes. “That we don’t understand why you want to deliberately hurt yourself?”

“Yes.” Katsuki grasps for patience but finds none. “Because Dabi *does*.”

“So tell us why!” Mina leans forward, frustration clear in the rise of her voice. “*Why* does it help?”

“Because it’s not my fucking *body*,” Katsuki snarls back with a curling of her shoulders. “But those scars sure as fuck helps me think that maybe it *is*.” And in a world that still doesn’t feel right some days it’s all she *has*.

“It is your body though!”

“And it’s fucking *not* because some people sure as hell keep bringing up the fact that he was *someone* before I was *me*,” Katsuki growls. “Just look to Midoriya! Or his parents! Even *you* told me to tell the rest of the class because Midoriya deserved the truth so it’s not that fucking simple and I can’t tell my brain that it is so lay off it!”

“She does make a good point.”

“I know and I hate it.” Mina narrows her eyes but there’s guilt there too and Katsuki’s chest twists because she doesn’t blame Mina but it is what it fucking is. “Get this, Katsuki. I’m not going to like it because I don’t like seeing you hurt because you’re my friend and I love you. But that doesn’t mean you can’t tell me stuff because I might not *understand* it-“ Her finger taps hard against Katsuki’s chest. “But I can *respect* where’re you’re coming from. But that also means you gotta explain it and not just leave me hanging. Got it?”

“I’m not-“

“Got. It?”

Katsuki glares at her, teeth digging into the inside of her cheek as she forced herself to work through the words because-

“Got it,” Katsuki snaps grumpily. “But I don’t want you to fucking *harass* me about it.”

“You made that clear,” Shinsou drawls.

“I will fuck you up,” she snarls. “Don’t think I won’t.”

Shinsou levels her with an amused look and Katsuki’s fingers curls because he’s been unusually good at pushing her buttons lately and she doesn’t like it.

She snaps her teeth and turns her head because *damn it*.

“I think I’m gonna call this progress,” Mina says, clearly pleased with herself as Katsuki eyes her warily. “Now, tell me more – what’s he like? I’ve never met him but you’ve clearly been charmed.” She wiggles her brow, snagging some grapes from the cheese plate. “I mean, what’s his age, his interests, his *personality*-“

“He’s a fucking *asshole*,” Katsuki hisses, still feeling prickly.

“Well, he’s clearly making use of yours.”

Mina chokes.

“Shinsou I *swear*-“

“Wait, wait – you were doing more than *kissing*?”

“I’m not talking about this with you!”

Chapter End Notes

I've been working and pretty much crashing after for a week and oh boy was it nice to get home and be able to write after a long, long sleep.

Next chapter is going to be something that has been a long time coming and, ah, *interesting*. It was supposed to be this chapter but, what do you know, Mina, Shinsou and Katsuki needed a moment together and I wasn't about to argue with it. They're good friends. And sometimes you gotta push a bit when it comes to friends and call them out of their bullshit, so to say.

Katsuki for being as she is and not opening up or explaining things and Mina - she might not have meant any harm when she pushed Katsuki to tell 1-A (and was for the best, ultimately, both for herself and Midoriya) but Katsuki is still very aware of the fact that she isn't *just* allowed to be herself because of past ties to the dead Bakugou and that's not fun.

And Katsuki is struggling with the fact that Aizawa has some legitimate concerns and a lot of stuff which is...

It be messy.

Thank you all for being wonderful! I'm working my way slowly through your comments but I wanna make sure you're all getting proper responses because your words warms my heart.

I'm artsy-death on tumblr and this has been chapter 65 of In The End.

I hope you enjoyed!

Deku

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

"It's okay to admit you miss them, you know?"

Katsuki turns her head, finding the soft pink skin of her friend's hand where it dangles off the bed.

Mina is sprawled out on her stomach, cheek squished against the pillow, chest rising and falling with her breathing, those strange little yellow antennas sticking up from a mess of pink curls.

The tips of her fingers presses against an open palm, the fingers half-curved and giving a small twitch as she traced up to the inside of Mina's wrist and pressed down, finding the beating of her heart in the pulsing there as she breathed out.

Jerks her hand away as if burnt as her phone suddenly vibrated, lightening up beside her as she slammed a palm down on top of it, eyes locked on her friend's sleeping face.

But Mina doesn't as much as twitch and Katsuki huffs, fingers curling tight as she dragged the phone towards her and turned it on, lowering the brightness before finding the person who saw it fit to contact her at 2 am and-

Can we talk?

Katsuki stares at the message from Mini Might, brow furrowing.

I know it's late

I really hope I didn't wake you up

I'm very sorry if I did

Maybe this was a bad idea

Katsuki drags herself into a sitting position, staring down at the screen as the increasingly nervous messages kept appearing one after the other.

Where? she writes back and sends it off.

The buzzing of her phone stops.

I'll meet you by the entrance?

She scrubs a hand over her eyes with a grimace before she hauls herself up and reaches for her jeans.

-

She keeps an even pace with Mini Might who is quiet, his spine stiff and eyes focused forward, the strange mood keeping her tongue silent for a moment but there's an absent sort of curiosity because he'd met her with a sharp nod and nervous sort of energy.

Around them building rises tall in the fake town used for training, grass traded for dark pavement, the moon bright in the sky above them as Mini Might comes to a sudden halt.

Katsuki pauses, taking a step back, hands slipping into her pockets.

He breathes in. And then out. Turning towards her, eyes catching and glowing green in the dark night.

"He's dead." The words are rough, a complicated sort of mix of emotions in the lines of his face, the way his fingers curl and uncurl. "Kacchan – he's really dead. You're not him." Fingers tightens, knuckles white. "But you said – you said you have his memories. That's why-" He licks his lips. "That's why you called me Deku, when we first met, in the classroom."

She regards him silently.

"You- you fight a lot like he used to. And – he was always angry at me but you're... it's a different sort of anger, I think?" He meets her gaze. "Kacchan... he was explosive, quick to go off and let his anger be shown and use his quirk-" His hand presses down against his shoulder where Katsuki knows there's likely burns beneath the fabric. "But your anger is different." He swallows. "Because you're not him."

The silence stretches between them, Mini Might's teeth sinking into his lower lip.

"It's hard to wrap my head around. That he's gone. I always knew – I knew something wasn't right after the accident. You moved away and Kaa-san, she refused to answer any questions and she was close to his – to Mitsuki-obasan. Kaa-san kept telling me not to worry about it but

he was my friend, the only one I had before starting U.A., and maybe that's a bit pathetic, looking back at it, because he didn't like me, he used to hurt me even and *yet*-" His face twists. "All Might told me that you know about my quirk- that I got it from him." His fingers sink into his skin. "When I first got it the only thing I could think was *if only Kacchan knew*." There's a self-deprecating thing in the twist of his smile. "I admired him, looked up to him. And - we've always understood each other. Even if things weren't always right between us there was *something* and I miss him. I-"

Mini Might scrubs his sleeve over his eyes before dropping it down.

"I understand now that it was unfair of me to push all these expectations upon you. I kept pushing even when you told me not to and I confided in All Might which just made a mess and I never meant for that to happen! I never thought that he could-" His jaw clenches down. "Uraraka-san, she told me that it wasn't my fault, that she spoke to you and that you explained what happened, and I don't think you'd lie about something like that."

"I lie about a lot of things."

Mini Might shakes his head. "You don't like me. You wouldn't lie to spare my feelings - I know that. You're not him but- you said that you're not *not* him. Because you remember those eight years before the accident, right?" He raises his chin. "I don't know how any of this works and I'm not asking for an explanation, I know I made a mess out of things and I'm trying to acknowledge that but- I can't ignore that when I look at you I don't see a stranger." He licks his lips. "I'm not- I'm not trying to say you're Kacchan. I know you're not. But do you remember that first match, when we went up against each other?"

"I do," she admits with a flattening of her lips.

"After it," Mini Might soldiers on as Katsuki stares at him. "All I could think was that I still had a long way to go. That, even with a quirk, you were still leaps and leagues ahead of me and I really, really admired that. I admired you. Not Kacchan but - *you*. Maybe I just can't shake off what was but for the last months here, at U.A., it's not Kacchan but you I've been looking up to and I'm trying to understand what that means." He clasps his hands together, fingers folding tight. "I want- I want to try again. If you'd let me. I'd like to get to know *you* and stop holding onto something that was over eight years ago now because it's not... It's not healthy, is it?"

“It’s not,” Katsuki says after a long moment.

“Yeah.” Mini Might gives her a pitiful sort of smile, trembling at the corners before he gave up on it, mouth curling down, discomfort clear in the tension of his shoulders. “I understand if you don’t want to. After everything – I wouldn’t blame you. But you’re one of the few who know about All Might and I and I haven’t had anyone to talk about it with and you – you made your quirk your own, just like me.” Which he’s not wrong about, Katsuki thinks, and it’s a parallel she hadn’t considered. “I promise not to call you Kacchan anymore, no-matter what, I should have stopped when you told me to.” It’s a rough admittance. “I’d like it if you kept calling me Deku though, if you want. It’s going to be my Hero name, after all.”

Katsuki isn’t sure what to feel about it, staring into green, echoes and ghostly feelings of a dead boy crawling beneath her skin, a strange sort of longing coiling inside of her that doesn’t really belong to her and yet *does*.

He wasn’t supposed to be quirkless. A sense of justice and injustice tangling tight into an explosive sort of anger. We were supposed to be Heroes together, stupid Deku-

“You have a strange sort of audacity, don’t you?”

Katsuki takes a step towards him, drawing her hands out of her pockets and poking a finger hard into his chest, towering over him as he shrunk a bit unsurely.

“*You* have such a serious fucking case of blaming yourself for everything that goes wrong that I can’t stand it, you know that? You’re *not* fucking responsible for what happened eight years ago and you’re *not* responsible for what happened during the exam either and if you can’t get that into your fucking head *we* are not going to be anything, understand?”

“I-“

“All Might is a fucking *adult* and you were entrusting something that frustrated you to him and he dealt with that in a messed-up fucking way but that’s not on you. I can’t say I liked what it all turned into but that’s still a choice *he* made.” She bares her teeth. “If you want someone to talk to about your quirk and whatever fucking mess you’ve gotten yourself tangled into, I’ll hear you out, it’s fucking whatever, but *you* are going to listen to what I say as well.” He stares wide-eyed at her as Katsuki works her jaw. “*You* need to fucking talk

to someone. And when I say someone I mean anyone other than All Might or your mom, for that matter, because somewhere along the line people seriously dropped the ball when it came to you and I don't like it because you're a damn kid."

"My mom isn't--"

"I don't remember Inko all that well," Katsuk interrupts him. "But I do know that she dealt with shit by not dealing with it and I bet that haven't changed. She's sensitive, it's whatever, she's your mom and you love her but that doesn't mean she's perfect. No one is. But you're *sixteen* and you've fucked up your arms so badly that you had to shift your entire fighting style to compensate for it. You're setting yourself up for failure because you're dead set on blaming yourself for everything and you're gonna end up killing yourself by the end of the year if you don't learn how to *not do that*."

She shoves her finger against him.

"I don't understand what this entire business with All For One is but I *do know* that the world somehow went entirely oblivious to a man that apparently fucked-up All Might so badly that he's spent the last few years pretending he was A-okay when he very much fucking *wasn't*. And he's decided that a teenage boy is the perfect candidate to fix the mess that he left behind and I'll put fucking money on him not sharing exactly what kind of responsibility that entailed so now you're up to your fucking ears in it. And I'll bet," Katsuki bites out, "that you're feeling real fucking overwhelmed because that is not a small thing to put on *anyone*."

Deku stares back at her, his chest rising and falling beneath her finger, but he doesn't deny it.

"You're a kid," Katsuki says, dropping her hand with a curl of her mouth. "You spent your life in a society that wasn't kind to you because you were quirkless. You were offered a once in a life-time opportunity and you took it because who fucking wouldn't? But you're killing yourself. And maybe it's ironic coming from me but for fuck's sake, if you want to be a Hero in your twenties you need to stop fucking yourself up or you're just gonna burn out. That's something All Might should have sat you down and talked about from fucking day one and he's not doing right by you if he's actually ignoring that."

"All Might--" It's a knee-jerk reaction and Katsuki knows it.

Judging by the way Deku's mouth clicks shut, he knows it too.

“You admire All Might.” This whole fucking thing isn’t fair, Katsuki doesn’t want to be in this position, but it’s fucking whatever now because no-one else seems interested in doing shit. “Your entire relationship is unbalanced if you cannot be in a position to question the decisions he makes so you need to find someone to balance shit out. Talk to Aizawa – he’s teaching you as well, isn’t he? It’s your quirk, your body, and it’s *you* who are going to live with the consequences of your decisions. Not All Might. And that man doesn’t know healthy – you’ve fucking *seen him*. He’s what, forty? Fifty? And he looks like he’s knocking on fucking death’s door and coughing blood like it’s fucking *normal*.”

“Can’t I just talk to you?” Deku asks after a long moment. “I mean, you already know. And you’re an adult as well.”

Katsuki gives him an unimpressed look. “I’m dealing with my own shit, thank you very fucking much. And I’m biased as shit when it comes to All Might. You don’t need polar opposites, you need a fucking middle-ground, and Aizawa is in a position to be just that. I don’t mind talking fighting styles, I *know* fighting, but you need more than that.” She huffs. “I’ll hear you out if you decide to be a fucking moron about it but I strongly advice you find someone else.”

Emotions coil inside of her and Katsuki knows that she’s influenced by something old and young and *dead* but shit, the boy had felt some way or the other about Deku and Katsuki-

She can do this much. It doesn’t cost her anything.

Deku drags both hands through his messy dark green curls, scrubbing down with something very close to frustration as she raises an eyebrow.

“I want to be a Hero.”

“Good for you.”

“I want to be a Hero when I’m in my twenties.”

“Fantastic.”

“I don’t actually *like* breaking my bones.”

“How healthy of you.”

Deku turns, beginning to pace as Katsuki shoves her hands into her

pockets, nails scratching down absently against her skin through the fabric, very happy that the sappy emotional shit was over and done with because *fucking hell*.

She supposes that it's curious that he'd chosen to go about it in this way, out of all the ways available to him. Trying to make amends, an expressed desire to keep her around because he admired *her*? Yeah, no, that's him being tangled up in the past, she's pretty fucking sure. He'd never been given a clean slate and he really did need to sit down and fucking talk to someone that could take a step back and look at the situation critically.

She's not that person.

Still, she has to give him credit. He'd pinpointed that it was unhealthy, was trying to look at the situation logically-

"But- I can't ignore that when I look at you I don't see a stranger."

Self-awareness is good, isn't it? Her therapist had always pushed that kind of narrative on her but fuck, she doesn't know. Isn't certain she actually cares to know but it fucking bugs her that he'd been left to fumble on his own with, what, his friends to help him figure stuff out?

Katsuki snaps her teeth in mild annoyance.

"I understand now that it was unfair of me to push all these expectations upon you." Yeah, and she'd fucking resented him for it, but she's adult enough to recognise that it's a misplaced sort of anger because he hadn't known that the boy was well and truly dead.

Maybe it's just because of her mellow mood, maybe she genuinely appreciates him making an effort and trying to fix a situation, maybe it's her resentment of All Might rearing it's head but – she feels strangely calm as she watches him work through her words.

Katsuki isn't a solution to his problems.

Maybe the situation weighed heavier on him than whatever the fuck All Might had gotten him tangled up in (which he doesn't deny and *the fuck?*) because it was personal but *what a fucking mess*.

He tells her more with what he doesn't deny than actual words but shit, had All Might actually stopped to think about what it meant to entrust the fucking fate of the world on the shoulders of a kid who genuinely thought that being the Symbol of Peace was just that?

“- should I talk to All Might first or should I just go up to him after class and be like, hi, Aizawa-sensei, I haven’t been entirely honest about my quirk and-“

She’s mildly hopeful Aizawa will deal with it because Katsuki had done the mistake of talking one-on-one with All Might once and isn’t interested in a repeat performance.

Whatever scraps of sanity she has left might just take a dive out the window.

“- or should I knock on his office? Bring tea? Coffee? One of those fruit squeeze tubes he enjoys-“

He wasn’t supposed to be quirkless. The sentiment pounds with the beating of her heart, curling and threading through her, toxic and unfair because being quirkless didn’t make a person *less*.

“-and how much should I tell him? I mean there’s a lot and it’s all not my story to tell but All Might’s and I don’t want to betray his trust but I can’t explain everything about One For All if he doesn’t know the whole history-“

“You’re overthinking it,” Katsuki says after a flat second of realising that the other was working himself into a muttering ramble of nervous energy while she spaced out. “You don’t need to do the whole thing in one sitting.”

“I don’t?” Deku stares at her. “But– what if he has questions-“

“Then you answer what you’re fucking comfortable with.” Katsuki rolls her shoulders. “Let him deal with All Might and figure shit out. It’s your quirk, he gave it to you. Just like he made that decision you are entitled to share what you want about it, *especially* if it’s essential for someone to help you figure shit out. If he protests that he’s a bigger fucking asshole than I thought.”

Deku opens his mouth, closes it, spends a moment staring into space, looking rather like he didn’t know what to do with her words.

“... I don’t think he’d actually be angry with me,” Deku says after giving himself a shake. “He entrusted it to me and he’s really been trying his best to teach me, you know? But-“ He looks up at her. “I wish he’d told me that I needed to change my style sooner.” A hand rubs up his bare arm, covered in a thick wrap of scars. “Maybe I could have found a middle-ground, maybe I should have thought of it on my

own, and I didn't want to linger on it because he's *All Might* and-"

"You admire him which makes it hard to question him when he's supposed to be right," Katsuki finishes and he searches her eyes before inclining his head.

"I was the one who chose to push myself because once I'm out there it feels like it's easier to just give it my all because not doing that would just make me regret it anyway but-" He swallows. "Sometimes it feels like he's deliberately just leaving me to figure things out on my own only to suddenly reveal something or the other when it suits him. And sometimes that is just too late." Deku's voice gets progressively quieter and quietly until his words trails off in a mumble, his arms wrapping around his chest. "Gran Torino taught me so much about One For All in just a week and I don't understand why All Might couldn't do the same? I guess? I mean, he's the actual former holder and-"

"You should really talk to someone else about this," Katsuki interrupts him. "I can't rationalize why the fuck All Might does anything. He... seems fond of you," she wrestles out the words. "It doesn't have to be malicious to still do harm. Maybe he's just a shit teacher, fuck if I know, which is why Aizawa is a much better pick for this conversation. He's an actual teacher and has been one for years. You know he hasn't been very impressed by All Might so maybe it's just as fucking simple as that."

"But you don't really think that." Deku studies her with intelligent eyes.

"... I think it's part of it."

"And?" He takes a step towards her. "What is the other part?"

"Do I look like I know what goes on in that man's head?" Katsuki shifts a step back, lips drawing back. "I already told you, I'm biased as fuck, I'm not the right person to ask about All Might." Exasperation creeps into her voice, tangling with frustration as anger and fear creeps beneath her skin in in a rippling memory.

"Please." Deku stares at her, young and vulnerable. "I'm tired of people keeping things from me. If you have anything that could help me in trying to deal with this - I'd like to know. Because I'm still trying to understand why he reacted like he did and what I could have done differently." His mouth tips down. "I've spent my entire life studying him, devouring everything, looping videos over and over again but- I don't understand it. He-" Deku licks his lips. "He really

hurt you. Because of m-“

Katsuki gives him a flat disbelieving look and his cheeks flushes red.

“I mean, you know-“ He waves his hand. “He reacted to something I told him and- I don’t want that to happen again! And I don’t think you do either so it’d *really* be in both our best interest.”

Katsuki turns her eyes heavenwards, staring up at the moon, because what the hell, was she being emotionally *blackmailed* now?

She might have been offended if the audacity didn’t actually amuse her.

“I think,” she says after a long moment. “That All Might accredited too much in what being the Symbol of Peace and in the same motion dehumanized himself.” She grimaces as he blinks at her. “It’s just a pet theory of mine, mind you. But the man made his entire life around being the single person upholding society, always smiling and *laughing*. And then, when he got hurt however fucking long ago-“

“Six years ago.”

“*Six years ago.*” She gives him a look but he shrugs. “He started losing his powers. But rather than admitting to it he hid it like a dirty secret, his body wasting away into just a pale shadow of what he was and- well, you know better than me how much he fucked himself over with that. He was down to only three hours when we started U.A. while stretching himself thin in an attempt at keeping up the farce because he was so convinced of his own importance that he couldn’t step back for even a second.” She waves a hand. “The world didn’t need-“ She grasps for a name but comes up empty.

“Yagi,” Deku supplies after a second as she looks to him, his mouth dipping into a brief sad thing. “Yagi Toshinori is his name.”

“Yeah, him,” she says with a snap of her teeth. “I think All Might, during the course of his career, put too much into being an idealized idea with very little invested in being an actual human being. He doesn’t take care of himself, that much is obvious, and despite losing his powers he’s walking around in clothes that are like eight sizes too big for him.” Her mouth curls. “His All Might persona is loud and boisterous, over the top, meant to inspire *bravery* and shit. But that’s not what he’s really like once he deflates, is it?”

“No,” Deku’s brows furrows. “Kaa-san found him creepy, strange, and

a bit awkward when she first met him before he introduced himself as All Might.” He looks embarrassed to admit it. “She apologized though! But – I think I understand what you’re trying to say.” A thoughtful, complicated thing settles over his face. “But isn’t that something all Heroes do?” he wonders. “I can’t just – go out there and cry when trying to save someone. *Saving people with a smile*–“

“Of course all Heroes do it.” Katsuki spreads her hands out. “The difference is that most people don’t work the insane hours All Might put into being a Pro-Hero during his most active years. He wanted to change society, and he *did*, but that didn’t come from *nothing*. He put everything into becoming the Symbol of Peace and he crafted a persona that fit that.” She huffs. “He was All Might more than he was–“ She sweeps a hand out.

“Yagi Toshinori.”

“Yes. *That*. He put himself up to be an *idealized idea* which he now wants you to step into and uphold because he thinks that it’s essential for this society to keep working.” She folds her arms, muscles bunching tight. “He’s been upholding himself to an impossible set of standards for *years*. Even now people look at him and meet him with awe and admiration and you don’t spend twenty plus years living like that and remain unaffected it. He’s responsible for the very growth and shaping of the Hero Society of today since it’s crafted on his ideals. I’m pretty fucking sure he’s not really coping with what that really means for him now that he’s not that all that anymore.”

Deku mulls that over, fingers twitching, clearly itching for one of his notebooks.

“But why did he hurt you then?” he asks finally. “Because that’s what I don’t understand.”

She shrugs. “You’re his apprentice, aren’t you? And I was causing you distress. All Might is used to taking the law in his own hands because All Might *is* the law. People don’t stop to question his decisions but will rather trip over themselves to defend what he does. He thought I was lashing out at you because I envied you and he sought to bring me back down on earth or some shit. Hell if I know what he was thinking but I can *gamble* that’s what he rationalized it as. He was protecting you.”

“I don’t like that.”

“Sucks to be you then,” Katsuki says flatly.

Deku shakes his head. "I am sorry," he tells her. "And before you tell me off again-" He hurries to tack on as Katsuki opens her mouth. "I *can* be sorry that it happened. I didn't like it, I knew it was wrong, and yet it still took me weeks to actually accept it was wrong." He worries his lower lip. "Maybe you're right. About telling Aizawa. But - I want to be there for All Might, too." He raises his chin. "I'm going to ask him if I can call him- if I can call him *Yagi-san*." The name comes out in a hushed whisper. "You think he'd let me?"

"I'm not the resident All Might expert." Katsuki turns on her heel. "Since we're obviously done here-"

"No! No wait - I still have more I want to talk about!" Deku's shoulder bumps against hers as she halts before he jerks himself aside, looking momentarily distressed and carefully measuring a distance between them as she gave him a disbelieving look. He nods in satisfaction before looking up. "My quirk-"

"It's 3 am. We can do this at *any other time*."

"But you're here now!" he protests. "And you have to be a *little bit* curious, right? Touya-senpai?"

"Just Touya is fine," Katsuki groans.

"But everyone else is calling you senpai."

"Because I can't make them fucking *stop*," she mutters with a flare of irritation. "You're being awfully pushy for someone who just minutes ago asked me to give them a fucking *chance*."

"But-" His face twists. "I really haven't had anyone else to talk about it with."

"That sounds like a *you* problem," she growls, but there's a curling sort of curiosity edging up along her irritation and her jaw clenches tight, working through the frustration as he stares at her with those damn green eyes and- "Fuck. Alright. *Fine*. We can talk about your fucking quirk."

"Really? Because if you really don't want to I'm fine with waiting? I don't want to be pushing you if you're not okay with it because I promised myself to listen when you said no and-"

"*Please* stop making me regret this more than I already am."

Chapter End Notes

And here we are. Katsuki and Midoriya having an actual conversation and trying to solve at least a little bit of the issues between them.

I am so happy to have reached this chapter, you guys. I mean, it took like 40+ more chapters than I anticipated but that's just how it goes.

I seriously just considered naming this chapter 'growth' because look at this.

I am always intrested in dynamics that lacks balance. I mean, we're supposed to love the fact that Midoriya is chosen by the world's Number One Hero, a man he's spent his entire life yearning to be just like. And I do love it - they're terribly endearing together.

But I don't think All Might does enough. He is, whether he wants to admit to it or not, in a position of power as an adult, as a teacher, as the *Symbol of Peace*, and as the source of Midoriya's intense admiration. And asking a fourteen-year-old to accept far more responsibility than he's aware of with the whole AFO and OFA history-

That is messy. And Midoriya?? In less than six months he's screwed up his arms so badly that he has to stop using them? That ain't healthy. That's not right.

(Like, yo, adults, *what are you doing?? This isn't normal??*).

At least that's my thoughts on it.

Thank you all for being absolutely wonderful, your love and support makes this such a joy to write and share.

I'm artsy-death on tumblr and this has been chapter 66 of In The End.

I hope you enjoyed!

Hold On Tight

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

”Meds not working?”

Hitoshi startles, turning his head up to look at Aizawa as he placed a hand on his shoulder with a warm squeeze, dark eyes on Midoriya and Katsuki.

Hitoshi knows that Katsuki can be a bit dumb when it comes to people. Why, exactly, some things just tended to go right over her head he can only speculate but he strongly suspects it’s because of her trust issues and veering paranoia making her just not take some things into account and hyper focus on others.

Still, it’s interesting to see how she completely misses the almost desperate sort of want that flashes in Midoriya’s eyes when she reaches out to run her fingers down his skin, studying the scarring on his arms as she kept an absent ear tilted towards him as he rambled on.

If Katsuki had actually been aware of it he knows she’d have left ages ago.

But she’s not.

”I didn’t take them,” he admits. “We were up talking late and by the time I returned to my room it was already past midnight.”

Mina had wanted him to stay and Katsuki had stared at him with those unreadable red eyes of hers, the scars on her chest visible above the hem of the t-shirt beneath her sweater as she pulled it off.

Sixteen and yet not. It’s still strange to think that there lurked something else beneath that façade of youth and he wonders if she would have kept existing like that if not for Dabi.

What a miserable existence.

”And you didn’t want to risk not waking up in time for class,” Aizawa hums. “I’ll let Recovery Girl know and you can take a nap in her office after lunch if you need it.”

“Thanks,” Hitoshi says quietly.

“Had a good evening?” Aizawa glances down at him and Hitoshi shrugs.

“Could have gone better, could have gone worse.” It was always risky, pushing at Katsuki’s buttons, but he’d also noted that she responded better to him when he wasn’t being exactly *nice* about it. And worse. He hadn’t quite found the right balance for it yet and he knows it’s only Mina’s presence that had kept Katsuki from going from defensively snappish to actual anger with the coiling of her muscles.

Mina had given him a look for it and what could he do but shrug? They both wanted to know more about what exactly tied Katsuki to the Villains and she wasn’t forthcoming about it. At length most of what she would say boiled down to *he keeps me sane*.

“Because it’s not my fucking body. But these scars sure as fuck helps me think that maybe it is.”

He thinks that it’s more to it – or perhaps more accurately, that they had become more as her relationship with Dabi deepened. He’s not blind to the way her fingers brushes beneath her shirt to touch against them with a complicated sort of mix of emotions in her eyes.

Hitoshi still remembers the way Dabi had looked, his knees on either side of her hips, Katsuki’s back bare against the cold ground, her chest a grotesque horror show of eradicated skin with blood spilling and dripping down, his eyes intense in their focus as he drank her in, relief in the way his shoulders loosened when he realised she was back to normal, his forehead pressing down against hers.

“Can’t allow anyone else to mark-up that pretty skin of yours.”

His eyes had gleamed as he flattened his palm against the ruined expanse of her skin, blue flames licking up from his hand, her skin sizzling as it burned and charred, her breath hitching-

It should have been horrific to watch but there’d been something about the entire scene that had struck him far more intimate than such a thing was supposed to be.

Possessiveness, violence, but also a strange sort of understanding between them.

Katsuki tells them they won’t understand and Hitoshi thinks he’s fine

with that, ultimately. He can accept her reasons for it but he doesn't understand her craving for violence or the way she clings to it.

But he still wants to know her reasons for it because it fascinates him.

She fascinates him.

It's heady to have her look at him when she's dismissive of so much of the world around her, names barely remembered, more focused on the harm people were capable of causing her than their personal lives, distrustful and seeing danger in everything around her.

Hitoshi is used to the way people look at him in fear because of his quirk, whispering and keeping their distance, nervous of what he was capable of. *A Villain's quirk* and yet he'd been accepted into the Hero Course, intent on proving them wrong, and he'd met Katsuki, cigarette between her fingers and wary red eyes peering back at him.

She could have done nothing. He thinks that it's an oddity that she doesn't when she odds between anger and apathy on a good day. But she had compromised with a language he now knows had come far more natural to her than spoken words with the folding of her fingers into a silent language his quirk couldn't touch.

"You want me to tell you your quirk isn't dangerous? Get off your high-horse. We're all dangerous. Yours is fucking tricky and I like it as much as I like Duct Tape's or fucking Froggy's. It's my mind and my body and I'm not about to risk anything just to put your mind at fucking ease. You either accept that or you don't."

It feels like a life-time since Katsuki spoke those words to him, cementing something between them because she didn't just fear his quirk, she feared *everyone's*.

It had been such a startling realisation, seated opposite her in that cat café.

"I don't trust your quirk. I don't trust people. Heroes, Villains, the world is fucking corrupt and ugly and I don't do trust. Anyone is capable of turning on you. Ashido could be planning to stab a knife in my back and I wouldn't know because she's so fucking genuine and I don't get that."

"I don't trust it."

He hadn't realised the true extent of it then. Had thought it exaggerated.

“The thing about trust, for a lot of people, is that it has to begin with trusting yourself to assess other’s trustworthiness. When that faith has been broken down, you really aren’t capable of trusting anyone else, no matter how much reason they give you to do so. Touya is trying, that much is clear, but if you stay friends with her you are going to have to accept that it’s a very real possibility that she’ll always have this issue and it’s up to you to decide if it’s something you can live with.”

Kayama had been blunt as she sat him down after he’d voiced his frustration about Katsuki still distrusting him after everything, her eyes sliding warily over the wrap around his neck at the provisional Hero-exam with that familiar clenching of her jaw.

It’s a hard thing to swallow that she had actually *died*. To understand that she’d put her faith and trust in someone and had it broken in the worst kind of way and it had completely obliterated the ability to trust *herself*.

To understand that it was paranoia founded in something that could be explained and understood.

She fascinates him.

Not just because of the circumstances surrounding her, the fact that she’s both thirty and sixteen, or the knowledge that she’s from another world entirely. It factors in, of course, he can’t deny that. But his fascination comes from another thing entirely.

In watching the way she finds comfort in Dabi’s violence.

In watching the way she looks at Mina with a desperate sort of love she cannot trust.

“Touya has spent her life in this world having to adjust to being something she’s not. She was an adult, had her own life, and then she was a child again and having to live up to the expectations of adults around her,” Aizawa had told him just a day earlier when he’d expressed bemusement about their conversation on the phone. *“She’s trying to adjust to what that means for her now that she has a handful of people that know she’s actually an adult at mind. To find a balance between being allowed to be herself and relearn the responsibilities that comes with being an adult and a Hero at that.”*

“Think of it like this,” Kayama had said as Hitoshi mulled it over. *“She’s trying to be an adult but also a peer to you because she’s not really an adult but she’s not really a child either. There will always be a duality to*

who she is, by her own words, because the parts of her that made Touya Katsuki are something she can't shake off. She says she remembers both lives vividly and she's still struggling to separate what was and what is. Her dissociations are a side-effect of that exact issue and a coping mechanism for her when she gets overwhelmed."

"That sounds complicated," Hitoshi had responded, feeling tired just trying to wrap his head around it.

"That's because it is," Aizawa had said with a grimace. "She will always be judged for the age she appears. It will get easier as she gets older but she lost all sense of agency when she was stuck as a child and made the choice not to reveal it to anyone. She's at the point where she's just shy of being recognised as an adult once again and she'll feel that discrepancy more keenly than ever."

Duality.

A dead boy and a dead woman.

Distrust in kindness and comfort in violence.

Like two different puzzles makes a miserable attempt at making a new one with missing pieces.

"I feel like I should be wary," Aizawa sighs as he nudges Hitoshi closer against him as a cold breeze makes his tired body shiver, the warmth of the older man slotting comfortably against his back. "Those two are trouble enough on their own but- together?"

"They could be good for each other?" Hitoshi shrugs. "Miracles does happen."

"You don't really believe that."

"Not even for a second," he agrees, leaning more firmly against his guardian after a moment of hesitation. "But I think I want to. Things have been... different without her here."

"You should invite her over," Aizawa says quietly. "It might do you good to spend some time together and talk things over."

Hitoshi stares at Katsuki as she scowls at Midoriya, discomfort creeping up her shoulders and tensing her muscles as he shook his head frantically with clear frustration.

“Maybe.”

-

Katsuki wakes to fingers carding through her hair, the touch soft, nails scratching down against her scalp as she froze, flattening down against the ground, the fingers in her hair stalling for a moment.

But they don't disappear.

“You were twisting and turning,” Mina says softly, quietly, her voice tangled in something Katsuki's too tired to place. “I think you were having a nightmare.”

Her heart pounds to hard inside her chest, fear coiling and nipping at her sanity as a shiver ran through her body.

“Should I stop?”

Katsuki shakes her head, unable to find her voice, her brain crowded with too many that didn't belong to her.

“Would it help if I'm closer?”

She doesn't know.

She nods anyway.

Mina slides down from her bed and into Katsuki's futon, shifting to squirm down beneath the covers, putting them face to face, Mina's eyes glowing soft in the darkness.

Her fingers slides back into Katsuki's damp hair, nails scraping down against her scalp as she stares into gold, her mind crowded with too much, her chest tight, her muscles tense and stiff and uncomfortable.

Her back is wet with cold sweat and she must reek but Mina shows no discomfort, her eyes searching Katsuki's, a small dip to her brow and gentleness in the way she touches her, dragging soothingly through her hair.

“Hey,” Mina says softly. “I'm here. Whatever you're dreaming about can't hurt you when I'm here.”

Katsuki doesn't know what she'd dreamt about. Can't sort one voice from the next inside her brain, everything crowding together in a leering mockery of hatred and desire to hurt, to tear down, blue eyes

glowing through it all, removed and distant as she choked and drowned with iron clamped heavy over her mouth-

“You’re safe.” Katsuki’s hand clumsily finds Mina’s shoulder with a tremble, fingers sinking down and curling against the skin there. “Nothing can hurt you here. It’s just you and me in a room with far too much pink. We’re on the floor and inside the futon my mom bought for me in case my best friend ever came to visit me at U.A.. Said best friend being you.” Mina’s palm smoothes down her sweaty hair. “It’s orange, because I know it’s your favourite colour. It’s not pink but I suppose it’s decent enough and it reminds me of you so that’s good.”

I’m sorry

I stand by my actions

Amélie-

I don’t want to.

“I really had fun yesterday,” Mina presses on. “It’s probably my favourite birthday and the fireworks were so pretty-“

Katsuki forces herself to focus on Mina’s voice, to grasp and hold on as she blinked, world flickering and slowly stabilizing as her coiled muscles loosened, frustration bubbling up in its place as she breathed out through clenched teeth as a tremble ran through her.

“Sorry,” she says quietly and the other quiets. “You shouldn’t-“

“Katsuki.” Mina presses closer, knees bumping up against hers. “If you say I shouldn’t help you because you’re convinced you have to deal with everything on your own I’m going to bite you.”

Katsuki blinks but Mina stares seriously back at her.

“I’m your friend, silly.” Mina presses forward, so close that Katsuki inhales the scent of mint still lingering in her breath. “I can accept that you don’t want to talk about some things with me as long as you do it with someone else. But I will not accept you denying yourself comfort because that’s dumb.” Her face softens. “I know you’re not okay, it’s not something you need to hide from me.” Mina sighs but her smile curls soft and kind. “Besides, cuddling is good, isn’t it? I can just stay here for the rest of the night and maybe you won’t have another nightmare.”

“I’m sweaty. I *stink*.”

“I think we both should honestly be thankful you don’t smell sweet.”

“Don’t be a smartass.”

Mina bends closer and Katsuki stares back at the contemplative look in her eyes, grimacing as they flickered yellow and then back.

“You should probably remove your t-shirt though,” Mina says finally. “I can’t imagine it’s comfortable to sleep in a wet shirt.”

Katsuki huffs but reluctantly shifts to drag it over her head, struggling briefly before revealing the scarred expanse of her chest to golden that dips down to study it, fingers twitching, as if to touch-

But she doesn’t say anything as Katsuki lets out a tired shiver and reaches for the cover only to have her hand stopped.

“On your back.” Mina nudges at her, and Katsuki shifts to stiffly comply, Mina on her knees beside her with a tilt of her head.

“I’m gonna cuddle you now,” her friend warns her before shifting to straddle her, giving her time to protest in carefully telegraphed movements, and Katsuki stills in surprise as she hovered for a moment before flattening down against her, nudging her head up against the underside of her jaw and stretching out her legs to fall on either side of her left leg, bare skin pressing against bare skin.

Mina is warm, the swell of her chest pressing up against Katsuki’s flat one, making no mention about the scrape of her shirt against the gnarly purple scars.

Katsuki slowly loosens her tenses muscles and Mina breathes out, relaxing her own, levelling more of her weight on top of her.

“This okay?”

“It’s... good,” Katsuki says after a long moment, not sure what to feel, one arm shifting hesitantly to loop around the other, palm settling flat against her lower back.

Mina hums.

“I think it’s good too,” her friend says. “This way you can’t sneak out again.”

Katsuki huffs, fingers curling into her skin. "I'll tell you about it in the morning."

"You better," Mina agrees, dragging the covers up above them both and burying down against her.

Katsuki stares up at the ceiling for a moment longer, a thumb touching gently down against pink skin.

"Mina?"

Her friend lets out a sleepy *mm*?

"We're just gonna ignore the soft bed and crash here?"

"You're soft."

"I'm not."

"You're really not," Mina agrees contently. "But you're warm."

Katsuki still feels clammy and she's very aware of the sweat drying on her back, making the fabric of the futon stick uncomfortably to her skin.

Her hand is cold against the burning heat of Mina's skin and her fingers curls against it self-consciously.

"I'm really not."

"But you will be."

"Mina—"

"Shut up and let me cuddle you until you're warm and toasty."

-

"You weren't joking."

"I am the *best* cuddler."

"Your skin is sticking to mine." Mina remains on top of her, looking absolutely content not to move an inch. "I need a shower," Katsuki sighs, blinking up at the ceiling. "... You should probably air out your room." Because it stinks of stale sweat and she grimaces.

“I can do that while I’m at class,” Mina hums, unconcerned. “And it’s not *that* bad. I mean, it’s no roses or anything but it could be worse.”

“This body sweats more than I like,” Katsuki grumps. “I never had this problem *before*.”

“Is it really that different?” The other shifts, arms pressing down against her chest to level up to look at her. “I mean we all kinda smell after training and we tend to be equally drenched in sweat.”

“... If you’re asking if there’s an actual physical difference then yes, those with high-level of testosterone sweat more than those with estrogen since it generally keeps their bodies cooler.” Mina blinks at her. “There’s studies on it,” Katsuki huffs.

“Have you been reading studies on *sweat*?”

“I *sweat* nitroglycerin. You can bet your ass I’ve been reading studies on it.”

“But your quirk allows you to control it, right? Can’t you just... dial it back? I mean, it’s one thing when you’re sleeping, obviously, but if you wanted to?”

“We sweat to cool off and if I just decided not to sweat I would *not* be having a fun time.” She scrubs a hand against the side of her face. “I normally just make sure I’m not sweating nitroglycerin and since I don’t sweat from my chest anymore I use the sweat glands on my back to compensate.”

“No wonder your shirt was so wet.” Mina’s lips pursues thoughtfully. “I guess I hadn’t thought much about the consequences of it other than the scarring.” A strange look crosses her face and she ducks her head, chewing on her lower lip. “Can I ask you something weird? I’m not sure if it’s offensive or not-“

“Ask away,” Katsuki interrupts, shifting to stretching out beneath the other with a satisfying crack of her back before slumping down, achy and uncomfortably warm but apparently trapped for the time being and it’s – strangely nice, she supposes.

If she ignores the way the other’s skin sticks to hers.

Mina’s fingers taps against her chest, just above the scar tissue stretching up towards her throat. “Your body, it’s different from the one you had as Amélie.”

“It is.”

“Is it weird for you? I mean, obviously it’s an adjustment, from how you look, but the whole other bits? You sweat more and you have, you know-“ She gestures low.

Katsuki stares at Mina.

Mina stares back.

A flush of dark pink slowly crawls up her cheeks.

“It was a stupid question, I shouldn’t have asked, it’s none of my business-“ Katsuki’s chest shakes and Mina freezes for a moment before her eyes grows wide. “Are you *laughing* at me? Are you – I was just *curious*-“

“You’re such a *teenager*.” Katsuki slides a hand down her face, pressing it against her mouth, fingers spread just enough to show the teeth of her grin. “You’re really trying to ask me if it’s different having a cock-“

“You don’t have to *say it!*”

“- as opposed to having a va-“ Mina’s hand slams down on top of her mouth, cheeks so dark that Katsuki can’t help the mirth that bubbles inside of her, mouth stretching as she reached up to tug at Mina’s hand. “You don’t have to be embarrassed. *I had one.*”

“It’s still weird,” Mina complains with a pout.

“It’s really not,” Katsuki huffs, entirely too amused. “It’s perfectly natural.”

“But yesterday you were refusing to talk about it.” Mina’s finger pokes against her cheek accusingly.

“I’m quite opposed to discussing my sexlife, *yes*. But there’s nothing strange about a bit of healthy curiosity.”

“... You sound like Midnight-sensei.”

Katsuki cocks an eyebrow.

“We had sex-ed last week.” Mina slumps down. “And I mean, it was interesting? A bit weird too because there were a lot of things about safety and work related dangers and so on.” Her brow furrows. “I

mean, it's basically what Mom has been saying only more... intense. I guess. But it did get me thinking about – you know, how some things might be different for you now. And last night you said it was hard to think of this body as your body.”

“I mean, it obviously is different,” Katsuki huffs. “There’s no escaping that, I guess. But it’s not necessarily a bad thing.”

She thinks about the way she’d sunk into Dabi’s heat, the possessive want that had curled through her at the knowledge that he was allowing her to lay claim on him before he did the same to her, pleasure, different but no less heady burning through her.

Something she hadn’t thought possible in this body.

“It’s not always easy,” she admits after a moment. “It’s harder to reconcile the fact that it’s a body that was someone before I was me than to come to terms with the physical differences. At least now. I used to have a much rougher time with it from being fucking *eight* again but – I’m learning to like being who I am.” It’s an awkward admittance at best and Katsuki grimaces. “Ultimately I wouldn’t change anything about this body as it is now. Not even the sweaty bits.”

“Does it get frustrating?” Mina wonders. “I mean, you don’t seem to care that much, I guess, but it’s hard to tell what you’re really thinking sometimes. When we were at the amusement park you didn’t seem all that bothered when people kept mistaking you for my boyfriend.”

“People will make assumptions, I don’t fucking care. I can correct them if I want to or I can just... not. Reality is that some people will give me shit for being trans so sometimes it’s just not worth the shit show.” Her mouth ticks up. “Besides, there’s worse things than being mistaken as your boyfriend.”

Mina hums, fingers drumming down against her chest, pausing over gnarled skin. “I mean, you’re not *wrong*.”

“Then there you go,” Katsuki shrugs.

“But you know Katsuki, if you ever decide you *want* to correct strangers then you know I have your back, right?” Mina leans forward. “I want to support you but I want to do it right so if your decision changes I want you to tell me.”

Warmth unfurls soft inside of her as she looks at the younger girl.

"If I start caring about what the fuck strangers think about me please hit me. Hard."

"Katsuki."

"A baseball bat wouldn't be misplaced. You know, really go all out and knock some fucking sense back into me."

Mina snorts, dropping her forehead down against her chest. "You're ridiculous."

"The world is ridiculous," Katsuki grumps.

"It is," Mina sighs, turning her head to look at the clock. "Do you think Aizawa-sensei would believe me if I told him I feel sick?"

"Not a chance."

"That's what I thought."

But despite her words she doesn't move, arms sliding down to wrap around Katsuki's shoulders, pressing closer and hugging her tight as Katsuki stares at the mess of pink curls, a yellow antenna pressing up against her chin.

"Mina--"

"Next time you have a nightmare," Mina interrupts. "I want you to have a full-tank of best friend hugs. Because I won't be able to give you them in person and I hate the thought of you waking up alone."

"... You're gonna be late."

"Some things are worth being late for," Mina says quietly but with a gentleness that twists inside of her because the world is full of terrifying people and yet-

Mina might just be the most terrifying of them all.

Katsuki slowly wraps her arms tight around the other and draws her closer, knees drawing up just enough to frame Mina's hips between them.

"Tell me about something you've been up to," Katsuki says roughly. "You like dancing, right? Tell me- tell me something about that."

Chapter End Notes

I can't express how happy I am that you enjoyed the last chapter. It was so much dialogue which is always a bit tricky to handle. But talking is very important in all relationships.

I had my spring term extended over summer so I've been up to my ears in dealing with that. Trying to catch up with your comments but will probably be rather busy until Wednesday have passed.

But I wanted to get this chapter up to you guys at least! Editing it on the bus to work.

I think a healthy dose of curiosity is perfectly normal between things, especially as things have settled a bit from the startling change of things and Mina and Katsuki both have a better understanding of where they stand with each other.

It was also interesting to weigh in Shinsou's POV and thoughts on things.

Thank you all for being absolutely wonderful - you make this such a joy to write and share.

I'm artsy-death on tumblr if you want to say hi there and this has been chapter 67 of In The End.

I hope you enjoyed!

Darling

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

“I am late, so late, Aizawa-sensei is going to *kill me*- oh! Here, this one should look good on you!” Mina brandishes a soft blue hoodie in her direction, lined with a soft cottony white thing in the hoodie and through the inside of it.

“If you give that to me you’re not getting it back,” Katsuki informs her, staring at the shark at the front of it, sprawled out on its back, head turned, a long-suffering look in its dark eyes and DEAD INSIDE scrawled beneath it.

Mina throws it at her and Katsuki smothers down the pleased little warmth that unfurls through her as she shrugs it on, tugging down the front of it.

“You have a thing for soft things, huh?” Mina hums, lip quirking up. “I’ll keep that in mind.” Her eyes widens. “Shoot! Bag is-“

“Here.” Katsuki fishes it up from where it had been discarded and throws it towards her.

Mina catches it and swing it over her shoulder. “Thank you! Alright – let’s get rolling!” Golden turns towards her. “You’ll walk me to class, right?”

“Yeah,” Katsuki agrees, shouldering her own backpack. “I need to talk with Present Mic anyway.”

“Great!” Mina claps her hands together. “And you can tell me why you were out late last night!”

Katsuki hums in agreement.

-

“So you really made up?” Mina swings their hands between them and Katsuki keeps her hold tight, fingers slotted together comfortably. “I mean, I’m glad he apologized and all but – how do you feel about it?”

“Hell if I know,” Katsuki admits with a grimace. “I still think he needs

to talk it out with someone because it's all a bit fucked-up."

"But it's a step."

"Yeah," she grunts. "It can't be helped when this body is what it is. I'm gonna keep reminding him of it."

"It be complicated," Mina agrees, lips pursing thoughtfully. "I mean, I don't know what I would feel like if a friend I knew wasn't the same person so I guess I see where he's coming from. But!" Mina looks at her. "It's not your fault, you know that, right?"

"It wasn't like I was begging to be this," Katsuki says a bit dryly. "They both died, in different kind of ways, and now there's *me*."

Mina's fingers clenches down around hers. "But I'm happy you're here."

"I... appreciate that," Katsuki admits with a crawl of warmth of her cheeks, eyes lowering to the ground because-

She's fucked-up enough as it is, with Mitsuki and Masaru and Deku as well. And while she knows, reasonably, that Mina has no cause to be resentful of her it doesn't make her existence any less fucked-up.

Something that shouldn't exist but does, tied to another world entirely.

Sometimes it just feels like a particularly screwed-up dream but Katsuki knows better than to let her mind spiral down such a path, to question the very basis of her existence because that's the kind of rabbit hole that might just end with her locked-up inside white padded walls.

But it's not easy. To look around and know that there had been something else that had been her normal.

"But I do wonder if I should be jealous," Mina tilts her head up. "Everyone keeps asking *my* best friend for help with all sorts of things. Hagakure is coming out to visit you and now Midoriya wants you to help with his quirk?"

Katsuki can't exactly tell Mina that Deku didn't have much choice in who to turn to – that what he'd tried to explain about his quirk made just about *zero fucking sense* and she still isn't over the fact that he'd eaten All Might's fucking *hair* to inherit it.

Because she's spent years watching All Might on the television screen, volume turned low, trying to understand what about him evoked such a desperate sort of want in the remnants of the boy crawling through her soul.

And Deku's quirk might be something like All Might's but it's fucking different too, with the red lightning crawling across his skin and-

Did it change from user to user? Did it fucking *evolve*? What did it even mean to pass it from one user to another? All Might had been quirkless, as per Deku's words, but there were quirkless parents birthing children with quirks which meant that the *potential for power* was in everyone and-

Only twenty percent of the world's population is quirkless, most of them old, Deku an oddity in this world's day and age and-

Katsuki is fucking suspicious that whatever One For All was supposed to be it's not as simple as Deku had tried to make it out to be. Because as soon as DNA got involved it was a sure fucking thing to get more complicated but there's such a shitty lack of research in quirk studies that she can't even begin to rationalize it or speculate other than draw a basis of comparison from what she knows and what she *sees*.

Fact: Deku's use of OFA is different from All Might's.

Was it because of the past users or had it awoken some sort of potential inside his fucking *genes*? Katsuki remembers Inko being able to move things with her fucking mind, small stuff, and while she'd never met his father the guy was supposedly breathing fire-

But sometimes children just activated their own fucking thing, unrelated to their parents, so that could say something but also fucking *nothing* and All Might had never explained anything about the old users, or Deku wouldn't say, which she can fucking respect but fucking *hell*.

Complicated didn't even begin to describe it.

It's a distraction, and Katsuki knows that, but *fuck*. All Might had never struggled or broken bones, Deku broke his on a weekly basis, *why*? She refuses to accept that All Might had somehow been *made* for OFA because that's a fucking stretch of reason that she refuses to carter to, even if Deku had looked miserable as fuck about it, as if it was somehow his fault and-

She had stared speechless at him for that admittance because *the hell was the man thinking-?*

Deku his chosen successor and apparently not enough because All Might was a natural user and Deku is... struggling. Clearly. Far more than a child had any *reasonable sense to struggle* because Katsuki is firmly in the camp of *breaking bones weekly isn't normal*.

Frankly, without Recovery Girl Deku wouldn't even *be* on the Hero Course because he'd just be laid up in some intensive care hospital because apparently he's two steps away from having his arms *permanently fucking broken* after not even six months on it.

It's impressive. Somehow. That it had been allowed to continue, she supposes, but it also left her vaguely nauseous because no-fucking *wonder* her being beaten to a fucking bruise had just sailed-by without as much as a *well this might not be right*.

Other than from Aizawa. Which makes her stomach knot because she can't get over his suspicion and-

"It's not like you need my help," Katsuki grumps, shoving her thoughts down before the frustration could take hold of her. "You're working with *acid*. It's volatile, what you're comfortable doing and not doing with that is entirely up to you to figure out." She glances at her. "But if you *do* want to talk about it I'm here, you know. Doubt I'd be much help but-"

Mina's shoulder bumps against hers. "I know, I'm just teasing." She grins, teeth flashing white against the pink of her skin. "You're my big softie."

"... I resent that description."

"But you can't deny it." Mina squeezes her hand. "I've had some new ideas but I think I'm gonna bug whoever I do my internship with. Or Aizawa-sensei. And then I'm going surprise the heck out of you next time we go up against each other!" Her eyes glitters. "It's really been too long since we squared off."

"We've only fought once," Katsuki muses. "Aizawa really wasn't happy with us."

"You'd have thought All Might knew better than to put an acid user against someone who makes explosions."

“It did get everywhere, didn’t it?”

“At least Todoroki was quick with that wall of ice of his.”

“And yet your acid melted through a good chunk of it.”

“You say that as if you didn’t deliberately set off an explosion in the middle of it, like, two seconds later!”

-

It takes Katsuki a good ten minutes to find the teacher’s lounge after dropping Mina off to Aizawa’s tired and unimpressed look, Mina looking not an inch remorseful as she waved her off, eyes bright and grin wide.

She contemplates knocking but shrugs and presses it open, stepping inside to several eyes flicking up in her direction.

“Touya!” Present Mic swivels around on his chair, glasses tipping down the edge of his nose. “I got your message! Did you bring everything along?”

“I did,” Katsuki says, ignoring All Might where he sits on the opposite side of the long desk Present Mic was occupying as she strolled over, tugging her backpack off her shoulders. “I went through the entire list you gave me.”

“I appreciate it!” Present Mic enthuses, nudging the chair out beside him and she drops down in it, unzipping and pulling out the strange small camera he’d given her and the SD card which he eagerly accepts and slides in place with a click. “You want to see what I’ve been up to?” he asks, peering at her. He opens up the files and Katsuki flicks her eyes in idle interest as he dragged the rows of short clips she’d made into another folder. “It’s for my brand spanking new JSL lesson plan!”

“I thought you had most of the bases down for it?”

“Sure! But there’s always room for improvement and visuals are key for a good sign-language course-“

Present Mic likes to talk and Katsuki absently filters it into *there is an extensive base online but not one that caters to Hero work which is why I needed your help in extending what is already there, correct some of it and make an extensive base for Hero-work only.*

Katsuki had gone through most of what he'd given to her, reading through the haphazard notes available on the computer, what-ifs and considerations, plans for a Hero-Need-To-Know to be implemented into the normal course for those who chose not to take JSL and-

It's a big project, no-doubt about it, and she glances at the bright yellow hair generously gelled up into an extravagant sort of thing meant to draw attention, speakers around his neck, headphones on his ears and-

When she first read about Present Mic the thing that had snagged her attention was the whole *burst his parent's eardrums at birth*. He's loud, quick to gesture and his yellow glasses hides where he tends to focus but Katsuki knows the signs of someone who is hard of hearing.

It's his business, ultimately, and Katsuki is content to let it stay that way.

But she thinks that if there were ever the *right* person for it then Present Mic is undoubtedly it.

“- This part in particular has been a bit of a struggle because there's no official names for different Heroes, other than All Might, which leaves spelling, in most cases, and numbers change twice a year which means it's hard to implement a quick-response sign for those sort of cases-“

Something good in a world that she struggles to understand.

-

Katsuki scowls down at the ground, a mulish sort of thing twisting her lips the further her footsteps take her from U.A. and Mina, the wheels of the bike rolling against the gravelled ground on the path towards the Todoroki house.

Choices. Consequences.

What's in a Hero?

She is one and yet the answer has never seemed further out of her grasp.

She blows out a breath, raising her head to the approaching mansion and tries desperately not to let the gnawing root of emotions inside of her take hold as she quickens her steps.

“Morning.”

Katsuki freezes, fingers dipped into the back of her sneakers to remove them, her muscles knotting tense as she slowly put her foot down and straightened up, turning around.

Dabi sits at the head chair in a pair of her yellow boxers and a simple dark t-shirt, his hair still wet, a bowl of cereal in front of him and the tip of his spoon pressing up against lips stretching out in amusement as she stares at him.

“*Morning?*” Katsuki gets out. “What the fuck is-“ She steps down on the back of her sneakers and doesn’t bother with the slippers. “What are you doing here?” she demands even as something desperate and tangled loosens in her chest as she threads closer, wary and curious at the same time.

“Can’t a man have breakfast in his childhood home without a demand for explanation?” Dabi drawls, dropping the spoon into the milk and soggy cereal in favour of leaning back, resting one arm on the back of the chair in a sinewy stretch of muscles. “If you must know, I’m not here for anything *murderous*.”

“I certainly *hope* you aren’t here to kill Endeavour in my underwear,” Katsuki mutters, fingers twitching, the urge to *touch* nearly overwhelming as he regards her with a curious glint in those turquoise eyes of his. “Still doesn’t explain why you’re here.”

“Why do you think I’m here, *darling?*”

“Is that what we’re doing now?” Katsuki raises an unimpressed eyebrow. “*Endearments?*”

Dabi shrugs. “Figured I’d try it out. But maybe you’re right, perhaps you’re not really a darling but more of a... babe?” There’s a musing consideration in his drawl.

Katsuki stares at him.

“Is that a no?” Dabi drags a hand through the wet spikes of his hair. “You’re not sweet enough for *sugar*, cutiepie is also out, suppose I can do pumpkin is you *really* insist-“

“Did you come here just to mock me?” Katsuki blurts out in a mix of

horror and fascination. “Did you hit your head or something?” She takes a reflexive step towards him and gives in to the urge to touch by leaning forward to press her palm against his forehead, feeling the warmth of his skin and the dampness of few wet spikes lying flat against it.

His hand curls around her wrist, dragging it down and giving her a small tug closer.

“*Honeybun?*”

She snorts, leaning forward to press her forehead against his.

“Dabi?”

"Hm?"

“No.”

“Worth a try.” His eyes glow prettily in the morning sun creeping through the curtains of the kitchen windows and Katsuki spares a moment to admire them. “I hear you’ve been busy. An amusement park?”

“Do I want to know how you know that?” Katsuki mutters as his arm loops around her waist and she blinks as he drags her into his lap, knees coming down on either side of his hips and her chest pressing up against his.

Dabi hums, dropping his chin down on her shoulder as she shifted closer, snorting as she heard him grab for the spoon again with a wet munch as she slouched down against him.

“Cute.”

The scent of him, the warmth of him, it never changes and Katsuki breathes in and then out, muscles slowly relaxing as she tilts her head, lips pressing up against his skin with a huff of air.

In return his free hand creeps beneath her shirt, settling against that first scar on her hip.

Katsuki doesn’t know why he’s there or why he’d chosen to appear like he had.

The thing is – she doesn’t *care*.

Dabi had always come and gone as he wanted and she'd never been interested in denying him. Had always sought him out when that red dot appeared on her phone in an invitation during the years she had known him.

One of the few constants in her life and one she craved, addictive in the understanding and easy acceptance he offered with the wrap of blue leaving marks on her skin and a shared cigarette.

She opens her eyes and wonders about the rationality and sanity of it as his hand remains warm against her skin, possessive in its claim and sure in its welcome.

-

"It hasn't changed much," Dabi muses as he peers into Shouto's room, something like curiosity in his eyes but also something darker in the twist of his lips as he slides the door shut. "Guess I shouldn't be surprised."

Katsuki can't tell what he's thinking, his fingers dragging against the wood of the wall as he traced further down the corridor.

"It's all shitty and bare," she comments idly as she follows him, hands in her pockets and eyes tracing idly over the artwork on the wall, the lack of family portraits in its bareness. "No personality."

The closest thing she'd seen to personal artefact were the books in Endeavour's office and that single cactus.

Dabi's hair is dark, messy with its gravity defying spikes, drooping in places where they hadn't quite dried yet. She thinks that – he doesn't look like he belongs inside these walls, his feet pressing bare, tall and scarred, the creation of his father's cruelty and a misfortune of fate that had made his body ill-equipped to handle his quirk.

Perhaps more accurately, Dabi had clearly left this life behind, or done his best to, with the hatred still clinging dark to his heart.

He'd never returned to for his siblings. And she thinks that, he shouldn't have had to, being a child himself when he left, the boy young in the picture in the newspaper.

Too young.

There are new scars wrapping down his thigh, not quite reaching his

knee but close, and she wonders what hides beneath the t-shirt hanging loose on his body. It's one of those ridiculously soft ones she'd bought to wear over her own scarring when it was in the early stages of healing, airy and thin.

"That describes him alright." Dabi pauses at his office door. "A Hero through and through."

He's not wrong, Endeavour's entire life is his work as a Hero – an identity that had bled into his personal life to ruin his wife and children.

It's a peculiar sort of cruelty that Endeavour didn't seem too keen to admit to, even if he'd made a clumsy attempt at talking with Fuyumi.

"In return all I ask is a chance to prove what it means to believe in a Hero."

Endeavour is disillusion and grandeur, a person grasping for something beyond him and it sets her teeth on edge. He was failing in living up to his role as the Number One Hero and he was ignoring the glaring fact that he needed to start with his fucking family and had instead latched onto something All Might had failed at.

Katsuki knows her role and how easily disposable she is in the grand picture in the eyes of this world's top Heroes.

It's a terrifying reality.

"I stand by my actions."

She looks up as the door to Endeavour's office slides open with a decisive sort of sound and slouches to lean against the wall, watching Dabi as he stared inside.

"He never let us in here." There's consideration in his voice. "How much information do you think is in here that could help the League?"

Katsuki rolls her neck.

"Hard to say." She shrugs. "He seems to keep most of it in his office at work but there could very well be a thing or two about."

His eyes shift to her, considering her where she stands.

He closes it shut, but whether it's disinterest and something else entirely she can only speculate at for Dabi is a complicated person and

she thinks that for all that he wants to leave Todoroki Touya behind it's not so easy.

The hatred bleeds too much into what he is for it to be so simple.

He turns to her and she raises an eyebrow.

"You know, I never told you but I suppose congratulations are in order. You're finally a Hero."

She cocks her head, mouth ticking up. "Oh? And what kind of Hero would I be if I were to ignore the Villain right in front of me?"

He steps towards her.

"What kind of *Hero*, indeed."

"For what it's worth, it's kinda shitty," Katsuki tells him as he threads towards her, a prowling sort of intensity in the shift of his muscles as his palm presses against the wall beside her head and he leans towards her. "But I only have to make it a year."

"A year. Working with *Endeavour*." The loathing wraps tight in the name as he studies her with intelligent eyes, scars gnarled beneath them, metal biting into his skin to give him a lidded sort of look. "And how's that working out for you?"

If Katsuki hadn't been wired the way she is she suspects it might have been terrifying.

But she's anger and violence that burns and froths beneath her skin and she has some to take it out on daily. Endeavour might leave her bruised and wrenched out but he doesn't break bones and his flames burn hot and controlled.

More importantly, she's not a child, and while she's in a position of reliance Endeavour is only cruel in the ways that can be excused which makes him *predictable*.

It's unlike the way All Might's fists bruises her body and skin, breaking bones with a violence she can't understand or can protect against as he brutalizes her without redemption in those terrible blue eyes.

All Might is the best!

It's All Might! Look, look! We're saved!

I knew everything would be alright once he arrived!

I really admire him. He's just... He's protecting all of us!

Thanks to him... we're safe.

"He hates my new name."

Dabi hums. "It suits you. *Touya Katsuki*." His mouth curls. "It must drive him up the wall."

"He avoids using it as much as possible," Katsuki informs him, shifting, her back pressing flat against the wall with a roll of her neck and a tilt of her chin, eyes dark. "It's quite fun."

"Only you—" Dabi presses closer and she knows the hunger in his eyes, an answering thing coiling deep inside of her. "Would find a way to push that man's buttons in such a way."

"It's funny, isn't it?"

"You're lucky I am fond of you."

"Am I now?" Katsuki's eyes lids, mouth stretching out as he leans closer, his breath ghosting over her lips in a warm thing that promises something she wants. "I think you're rather lucky I feel the same."

His hand presses against her belly, flattening and gliding down to stroke with consideration against the hem of her jeans as he tilts his head *just so*.

Waiting.

Katsuki grabs the hem of his shirt and pulls him down to close the last of the distance, his mouth curving up against hers as his hand dips down and she groans into his mouth as his hand wraps tight and warm around her, hips pressing closer to trap her against the wall.

"Can I suck your cock?"

Katsuki breathes a laugh against his lips, eyes gleaming warm.

"Sure that's all you wanna do?"

Dabi hums, his scarred skin dragging against her cheek as he leant to scrape his teeth over the shell of her ear.

“Everything in its due time, *darling*.”

Katsuki chokes on her protest, breath hitching as he curved up her straining cock, a groan escaping her, an answering rumble of amusement deep in his chest as her fingers clawed down against his skin as she pressed against him.

“Well?” She can’t see him but she fucking *knows* he’s smirking the fucking asshole.

“Fuck yes,” Katsuki growls as he curved down her length, the strain uncomfortable in the tightness of her pants as she jerked into his hold with a noise caught desperately with teeth sinking into the inside of her cheeks. “But you’re fucking me after.”

He draws back, just enough to catch her gaze with dark hungry eyes.

“Since you ask so prettily.”

His hand slinks out of her pants and her head hits the wall at the sound of the button being unmade, the zipper pulled down as he sunk to his knees in front of her, a desperate groan leaving her as her hand found his hair as he pressed warm and hot against the front of her boxers tenting visibly.

Katsuki’s head tilts back against the wall, pupils dilated as he leant forward to drag his tongue warm and wet up against the front of it, her hand sinking into his hair and clenching tight.

Chapter End Notes

For some reason Dabi just really reminds me of a stray cat. I think I could write an entire essay on exactly why that is but I'll spare you the words.

Katsuki has a lot of thoughts about the Midoriya situation this chapter. I think that, if Midoriya didn't admire All Might as much as he does there are things he would stop to consider more thoroughly because we know he's clever. His Hero books are very much evidence of this - he knows how to break things down and work with it. But as we went through a few chapters back - admiration has it's issues.

And then we have Katsuki on the opposite end - wrapped up in her fear and anger when it comes to All Might and very paranoid when it comes to quirks. And because Heroes, Villains and quirks

aren't her *normal* she naturally questions things that those in the BNHA world does not because she hasn't grown up to have it normalized.

I'm sure they'll make for *wonderful* combination.

I've been... slow in responding to comments. I am very, very sorry - my back has been killing me and just sitting down to writing has been lowkey killing me as of late. Doing my very best to deshrimp and take plenty of walks but man, I'm craving a good massage. Love all of you - been reading and rereading your comments and I'll try to catch-up! But almost done with chap 69 so might tidy that one up first.

You can find me on tumblr as artsy-death and this has been chapter 68 of In The End.

I hope you enjoyed!

Bergamot

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

"And they say romance is dead." Dabi loops his arms around her, his naked body pressing against her back as he slouched down on top of her, chin dropping down against her shoulder to peer into the water steadily filling up the tub.

It's one of those nice traditional hinoki ofuro ones that's like a small onsen. The window is level with the edge of it, available to be pulled back and offer a view of the garden outside, and the mist is curling up from the heat of the water. Inside the tub there are two opposite platforms raised up just enough to allow two sit down opposite each other.

Dabi stretches one arm out, fingers brushing against the cap of a jar, and Katsuki grunts as he levels more weight upon her to reach the last bit.

"Bergamot?" He gives the jar a rattling shake.

"It's a type of citrus," Katsuki informs him absently. "I think there's a watermelon and mint one in one of the cupboards."

"What kind of combination is that?" Dabi asks dubiously, one hand curving to tickle gently over her belly.

"Which is why we're going with bergamot," she says, amused and fond as he noses against her neck before breathing out. "Get in, I'll grab something to snack on." She nudges at him until he reluctantly detaches himself, and Katsuki threads her way to the kitchen, closing the door half-shut behind her to make sure the heat remained firmly inside.

Not that Dabi needed it, he'd be plenty warm anyway, but-

All the same.

She digs out some cold grapes from the fridge and takes the time to pour two glasses of elderberry juice, filling them up generously with ice before hauling it back to the bathroom after a quick glance to the clock.

Fuyumi had said she'd be back sometime during the afternoon and Endeavour wouldn't be home until late night at the earliest.

Katsuki nudges the door open and slips inside, sliding it shut behind her and locking it shut decisively.

Her mouth ticks up at the sight of Dabi with his arms spread out in the edges, slouched down with his head tipped back, his bare body visible in the soft green tinted water. His head tips to the side, one turquoise eye opening up to peer at her, mouth curling up.

"Enjoying the view?"

"You're pretty," Katsuki informs him, placing the fruit and drinks down on the edge of the tub. "So, yes. I am admiring."

"You keep using that word. *Pretty*," he tastes the word.

"Pretty. Handsome. *Hot*." Katsuki pulls her shirt over her head, dropping it down on the floor and reaching to flick her button open. "But I like pretty. And you *are*." She pulls her zipper down and wiggles out of her pants, kicking them aside.

"Feel free to tell me all about how pretty I am," Dabi drawls, eyes hooded as she drags her boxers down her hips and steps out of them. "My ego is always in need of some stroking."

Katsuki hums, hauling herself over the edge and sinking into the water. "Is that the only thing in need of stroking?" she teases as she relaxes into the sheer wonderful heat of it.

"You let me fuck you twice on top of Endeavour's desk." Dabi's mouth curves up. "I assure you, I'm quite content and you've left me with jerk-off material for days to come."

"Next time I'll fuck you on it," she offers, stretching out, legs brushing together.

"You make me such pretty offers." He reaches out to break off a stem of grapes, tilting his head back and drags the bottom one off with a hum as he bit down with a wet crunch. "I admit the sex is a happy bonus, but it's not the only reason I'm here."

"No?" She raises a brow at him.

"Has anything strange happened recently?" He regards her. "Someone

contacting you?”

Katsuki thinks of the number in her jacket pocket, the slowing of time, and the panicked breathing in the alleyway as people walked past her with no-more than a quick glance at most-

“Do I want to know what you’ve gotten yourself tangled in this time?” she asks in exasperation. “And why it has something to do with *me*?”

“A miscalculation.” Dabi admits with a brief grimace which- *huh*. “It turns out one of the people of the yakuza we’ve been in contact with has a quirk that forces someone to tell the truth once a question has been asked. Wackjob and Twice are both staying with them at the moment and you came up.”

“Still doesn’t explain why they’re interested in me,” Katsuki says, brow furrowing.

“The man in charge, Chisaki Kai, calls himself *Overhaul*, wants a world without quirks.” She files the name away for future research with a hum. “He’s obsessed with returning this world to what it was before. We’re playing nice for now with them, on Tomura’s order, but he killed Magne so it’s only a matter of time before the game is up.” He drags off another grape, throat bobbing as he swallows. “He’s got quite the bothersome quirk that he quite enjoys using which makes him something of a hypocrite.”

Katsuki chews over his words. “So because I know what a world without quirks are like-“

“He’s interested in knowing more,” Dabi finishes. “It sounded on Wackjob that he’s possibly interested in recruiting you as well. I don’t know how much they told him, phone calls are out for the moment, but assume anything you’ve told either of them to not be a secret anymore.”

“How bothersome.” Katsuki drags a hand through her hair, not sure what to feel, but deciding not to linger on it *now*. “It does answer some questions at least. What’s his quirk?” she asks to distract herself.

“He can disassemble and assemble anything he touches.” Dabi spreads his fingers out with a wiggle.

Katsuki stares at him.

“As in-“

“He can disassemble someone and then reassemble them again, yes.” He regards her with a tilt of his head. “He’s clever so don’t underestimate him. The Yakuza are a dying breed but there’s still enough of them around to cause a problem.” He bites down on another grape. “Figured you deserve a heads-up at the very least.”

“One of his members cornered me on the bus yesterday,” Katsuki admits with curl of her lips. “Told me to call them before Sunday.”

“I’m not gonna tell you what to do,” Dabi tells her. “But I’d stay out of it if I were you.”

“Doesn’t sound like he’s interested in giving me a choice in this.”

“Which is why I’m here.” Dabi bites off the last of the grape, dropping the stem off on the plate before slouching forward. “We’re taking responsibility.”

“Responsibility?” Katsuki echoes nonplussed. “You’re joking,” she says flatly at his amused look.

“Tomura still wants you to join the League,” he tells her. “He’s not too impressed by someone trying to steal you from under his nose after killing one of ours.”

“Lovely,” she mutters, sinking deeper into the water. “I’m just really vibing with all the people who won’t *leave me the fuck alone*.” She blows a breath into the water, glaring down at the bubbles for a moment before pulling up. “So, what does this *responsibility* entail?”

“I need your blood.”

“You’re gonna have to explain that one a bit more.”

“Wackjob’s quirk-“

“Nevermind,” Katsuki interrupts him. “Got it. Blood. Lovely. Sure. Why not. Feel free to tap me of all the blood you need.”

“She’ll be delighted.” Dabi’s mouth twitches up. “She dreamily talks about your blood on a weekly basis.”

“In any other conversation that would be disturbing,” Katsuki informs him dryly. “She only needs to ask, I have enough to go around.”

“Most would be wary, considering her quirk.”

"It's off-putting," she agrees, thinking of the *offness* of knowing that it was Himiko but looking into a stranger's face. "But – it's Himiko," she says lamely. "If it makes her happy I don't really care."

He hums. "You've changed."

"I know," Katsuki mutters as his hand dips beneath the water to curl around her ankle. "Not all for the better."

"Your worst issue," Dabi says, squeezing down. "Is your tendency to overthink things. You need to learn to *relax*."

"Relax," she echoes blankly.

"How much of yourself are you second-guessing exactly, *Touya Katsuki*?" His palm glides up her leg. "You're trapped under conditions of servitude. Do this, do it right, *they're watching you*." He watches her intently. "You've gone from one kind of falsehood to another in this Hero-charade."

"Is that what we're calling it now?" Katsuki stretches out her leg, toes splaying against his lower belly. "A charade?"

"Am I wrong?" His head tilts. "You've never hesitated when it comes to fighting – you've actively sought it out for as long as I've known you. But that isn't so true anymore, is it? The world is unhappy with you and blames you for something that wasn't your fault and there's no-one stepping up to clear your name of the blame."

"Fair enough," Katsuki agrees with a grimace because Endeavour had called out her on the same fucking thing. "Also, your stalking is becoming a bit worrisome," she informs him with a flat look. "How did you know about the hospital thing anyway?"

"Overhaul," Dabi admits easily. "Apparently he's convinced you want your quirk gone because you were cautious in using it. It's part of why he's so convinced you'll join him."

Katsuki stares at him.

"So because I refused to pull off fucking *explosions* under a *hospital*–"

"You've only further sold him on the idea." His voice is wryly amused. "In this case, it did not play in your favour."

"I'm just doing everything wrong lately," she mutters, snagging her

glass and clenching down.

“You wouldn’t have this trouble as a-“

“Why did you join the League anyway?” Katsuki interrupts him, not quite in the mood to hear another recruitment speech because the temptation is really starting to get to her. “There are so many ways you could chose to destroy Endeavour but you’ve gone with *death*.” She wrinkles her nose. “If you want him to truly pay for what he’s done why not, I don’t know, fucking *expose him*? He’s dedicated his entire life to becoming a Hero, rather fanatically at that, yank that from beneath him and you’d fucking break him.”

“Why indeed,” Dabi drawls. “You’ve heard of Stain, right?”

“The Hero Killer, yeah,” she agrees with a furrow of her brow. “Endeavour-“

“That’s a lie, conveniently told to keep your former classmates out of trouble.” She blinks at him. “Apparently that green haired boy-“

“Of course it’s fucking Deku,” Katsuki breathes out.

“Shouto and Ingenium’s little brother was involved in some sort of revenge scheme.” His mouth ticks up. “Kurogiri and Tomura were looking to recruit Stain but things got a bit side-tracked and, well, the rest you saw on the news.”

“Yeah.” She bares her teeth. “The same guy who called All Might the *only true Hero*. Can’t see how it relates to you signing up to kill said Hero.”

“I don’t agree with everything he said,” Dabi muses as he sinks deeper into the water, his voice pleasantly rough as he breathes out with a small huff. “But he wasn’t wrong about the falsehood and corruption of the Heroes. They need to be taken down and brought to their knees for a brighter future. The League was just a convenient thing that was brought to my attention.”

She plants her elbow on the wooden edge, dropping her chin into her palm. “If you really want people to get behind you then you really fucked-up going after the kids,” she says dryly. “They’re the next new generation of Heroes and instead of making a case for yourselves you’ve actively antagonized them instead.”

Dabi raises his shoulders in a lazy shrug. “I wasn’t involved in the first

attack and the second one was just a handy way to nab you right under All Might's nose. That Tomura chose to focus on you out of everyone was just a coincidence that I was happy to run with."

"But you don't condemn it? Even with Shouto?" Katsuki wonders. "You're clever, Dabi, you know there are better ways to do things if you really want to bring change to the Hero system. If you're dead-set on proving that the Hero vs Villain mentality is *wrong* why not make a fucking case for it? Expose all the fucked-up things going on."

It's one of those things that she genuinely can't wrap her mind around. She likes violence, she craves it, but she's not so stupid to think it it's a solution to anything.

An eye for an eye and all that jazz. She'd counted in it when she lashed out at those who had thought she made a handy target - it kept them coming back, cornering her and offering an outlet for her anger and frustration without them being none the wiser.

It didn't make them *stop*.

"They wouldn't allow it," Dabi tells her, eyes intent now. "You see the way media spins everything. My death was written off as a *tragic accident*."

"Then don't give them a fucking choice about it." Katsuki shifts to lean forward, staring into his eyes. "I don't know what the hell Shigaraki is planning with the League, I don't particularly care at the moment either if he's working with the fucking *yakuza*, but clearly just defeating the Heroes won't do shit, will it? All Might lost his powers but he's become the shining star of a generation growing-up to want to be *just like him*. If Endeavour actually manages to pull off this whole *becoming the new Number One Hero* thing, and you kill him, it will be the same fucking song and dance again."

"So what you're saying is," Dabi slowly tastes the words. "*Do it better*."

Katsuki's fingers twitches and she slumps back with a look at the ceiling "Maybe I am," she mutters. "Or maybe, you know, have a fucking *plan* before trying to recruit me. I'm not-" She works her jaw. "I don't like this whole Heroes and Villains, good and evil schtick. I re-watched Kamui Woods debut while doing some research since everything points to him hitting the high numbers with the next ranking, and he called a damn purse-snatcher the *incarnation of evil*." It's fucking *ridiculous*. "I know things are shitty, I'm not blind to it, and the power imbalance is fucking awful, but just killing them won't-"

She drags a hand through her hair and gives it a tug before letting it drop back into the water because-

Katsuki knows that sometimes just being compliant is the same as being on the wrong side of history.

Knows that keeping your mouth shut and head down can had terrible repercussions for those in positions of suffering.

But she's not idiotic enough to think that joining the League is a solution, as it is now, a misfit group with no clear goal and a personal vendetta scripted into something that's going to turn ugly.

"As I see it, it's a structural thing, right?" she tells the ceiling with a blank sort of tired look. "It's not just the Heroes upholding it, it's the whole damn society that has been routed to think in one way. The very *laws* are written to actively encourage Heroism because quirk use, even in self-defence, will earn you a straight trip to jail and that's *messed-up*. It makes a system of *reliance*." She waves a hand. "But killing – it won't make people look at that will it? It won't make them sit down and look at the *bullshit* that is making a media circus out of saving lives or having something like the Hero Public Safety Commission contract all working Heroes-"

"What's this about the Hero Public Safety Commission?" Dabi interrupts her and Katsuki pauses before stretching out her leg to press against his belly with a roll of her shoulders to level them up against the edge just enough that she could look at him, her chin nearly in the water.

It's not the most comfortable position but-

"Have you looked at the contracts that they're responsible for?" she asks after a long moment.

He raises a brow at her. "I can't say I have," he admits.

"Yeah, most won't, I don't blame you for that." It's ultimately her paranoia that had driven her to do so in the first place – *take nothing at face value*, Katsuki had done her research before applying to U.A. but she hadn't been overly impressed. "It's a fucking nightmare of fine prints." She grimaces. "When I was first looking into U.A. I was considering the support department but it basically signed away any and all of my creation for Hero use." She levels a frown at the water. "The entire course is *designed* to encourage it, and most are happy with that, all for the *greater good* and that fucking jazz."

“And the Hero Course?”

“Puts you under its laws and restrictions,” she says after a moment, not quite sure how to describe the pages upon pages she’d gone through. “The Public Hero Commission is responsible for the core values that Hero Schools are expected to adhere to and I got to be up-front and personal with the way they’re the ones who are in charge of designing the provisional and normal exams for passing Heroes. They get to have their sticky fingers in the shaping of Heroes and-“ She licks her lips. “There are things on the internet as well, that’s a bit muddy but, I don’t like it. The more I learn about it- and they’re not *interested* in painting a fair picture you know?”

She peers up at him and Dabi stares evenly back.

“They held a speech before the last exam.” Katsuki drags a hand down her face. “It encourages violent and fast responses and with Villain being slapped on any and all criminals it veers into something that’s-“ She waves her hand. “It’s fucked-up. People commit crimes for all sorts of reasons – desperation, poverty, sheer cruelty, because of ideals, because they’re fucking *tired* of being trapped in whatever lot life has given them. But- the new Hero Course isn’t designed to entertain shades of gray, it’s all black and white morality with them being good, no matter what they do, because they’re the *Heroes*, and anyone who opposes them are the *Villains*. Good and evil narratives are rarely good for the long run and the *shit* Heroes sprout these days are just-“ She blows out a harsh breath.

“You can’t ignore it anymore.” His gaze is knowing.

“No I fucking *can’t* because it keeps getting brought to my bloody attention.” She bares her teeth. “And now I’m stuck in the same system and I don’t fucking like it. I was supposed to have three years to make some sort of decision but that was quite so happily taken out of my hands and shit, there weren’t ever *repercussions*, Dabi. That’s the power Heroes have and I *don’t fucking like it*.” She drags herself into a sitting position, hands curling tight together between her legs. “I don’t like the Heroes and you and the League don’t even have a damn *plan*. But I can’t fucking ignore that there’s something really messed-up going on and with All Might losing his powers society has been rattled and the next Number One Hero is a child abusing *piece of shit* and it’s-“

“Breathe.”

Katsuki swallows the words that want to crawl desperately out of her throat, the urge to tell him exactly where to shove his fucking-

But instead she draws a breath, forcing her lungs to expand, her heart pounding hard inside her chest, and there's an itching beneath her skin, crawling through her veins-

"You're glowing."

"Fuck off," she bites out but his hand is curling around her wrist, his body shifting forward, and she jerks as his palm presses flat against her chest, burning hot against a sudden contrasting iciness she hadn't been aware of.

"Don't look down," Dabi murmurs, his shoulder nudging up beneath her chin, and Katsuki stares blankly at the wall, her breathing coming out raw and rough as her hands find his chest, forcing herself to focus on nothing but his breathing, the inhalation, the exhalation, because there's panic creeping up through her and-

She's not having a fucking panic attack in the bath, she's *not*, and she's not fucking *glowing* because that would be *insane* and-

"Please tell me you're joking," Katsuki gasps into his ear. "Dabi-"

"I've got you." The words, from his mouth, contrasts to strange to what she knows of him that for a moment Katsuki wonders if she's hallucinating.

She squeezes her eyes shut because-

Fuck it.

She's so tired of everything being a fucking *mess*.

-

"Is there any way you can one of your Heroes to get you down to him?"

Katsuki, currently sprawled out with a towel around her hips and arm over her eyes on her bed, huffs a tired breath.

"Maybe," she says after a long moment. "That truth-detector detective was concerned about All For One having whatever the fuck got me here. He'll want to know if something has gone wrong." She drags her arm down just enough to peer up at him as he straddles her hips.

“Why the fuck was I glowing, Dabi?”

“Can’t say I know enough about quirk theory to take a gamble,” he drawls, his voice pleasantly rough and she latches onto that familiarity and comfort because he’s still here, despite her being a living mess. Maybe because they both are. “But quirks are tied to emotions so – try to stay away from that.” He wiggles his fingers over her face.

She gives him a flat look.

“I live with *Endeavour* and I, apparently, have the fucking *yakuza* after me. I’m not sure what calm is right now.”

“You can always pick up yoga.” There’s a teasing lilt to his voice. “I hear meditation is good for the soul.”

“My brain is not good on the whole *being left alone to think* thing. My paranoia tend to skyrocket.”

“At least it stopped.” His fingers taps against her chest, the feeling odd with the limited feeling of touch in the rough scarring. “Keep your phone on you.” He leans forward. “Call me if anything changes.”

“And then what?” Katsuki mutters as she stares into the turquoise of his eyes. “Because this seems like a whole lot of *what the fuck* territory.”

“At least I’ll know you won’t have keeled over and died on me.”

“Gee, thanks,” she says dryly. “I’ll try not to do that.”

He considers her, fingers tracing idly over her bare chest.

“How good are you on memorisation?”

She furrows her brows. “Real fucking good.”

Dabi rattles off a number and she sorts it out in her head, folds her fingers into the matching signs, and grunts in acknowledgement.

He holds up two fingers and rattles off a second one and she hesitates but repeats the process.

Runs through them both once more and files them aside with Dabi’s number.

“I’m guessing the first is to Himiko,” Katsuki gives him a suspicious

look. "The second one--"

He holds up three fingers and she clenches down her teeth but memorizes it and then rattles them back to him at his expectant look.

"There," she bites out impatiently. "Who--"

"Tomura's is the second one." It's not the first time she's heard him use Shigaraki's first name today but it strikes something in her now, on her back, staring up at him, that there might be something *more* going on in the League. "The third one... if you have no other choice, call it in. They owe me a favour."

"A favour," she repeats warily.

"A favour," he agrees, mouth curling up into something darkly amused. "And if they know what's good for them, they won't ignore it. *Now.*" His hand curls around her wrist. "About that *blood.*"

Chapter End Notes

I am never, ever, letting anyone look at my documents. I am taking the number of versions of this chapter to my grave. Rip my sanity.

And Katsuki's.

Also hello! It's been too long, missed you guys! It's October, isn't that just amazing? I am buying myself a hokkaido pumpkin and roasting it up with some goat cheese tomorrow to get those autumn feels rolling before suffering over all the schoolwork piling up. Gotta balance life and all that junk.

This chapter turned out to be pretty important to get right because, for all that Dabi and Katsuki's relationship is what it is, dynamics be changing, and it's very interesting to explore because they're on their own paths of life while intersecting bcs of their connection to each other. So - what we're seeing in this chapter is a rippling effect of that.

It's like 3 am and I need to do a last edit of this before sleep but I love you guys, sorry this took forever to get out but - it was messing with me.

I'm artsy-death on tumblr if you want to say hello there and we've hit chapter 69. Imagine that.

I hope you enjoyed!

Suits and Glamour

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

“Do you regret it?” Dabi murmurs into her ear as he draws her close, his coat brushing against her knuckles before she creeps them beneath it, her fingers splaying against the warm scarred skin of his lower back beneath his shirt. “Becoming a Hero?”

“I don’t know,” she admits as he buries her forehead against his chest and breathes in the scent of ash and ruin.

“When you have an answer, I’ll be waiting for you.”

He holds her close, his heart beating steady and calm, and she squeezes her eyes shut tight.

“I know,” she tells him. “If you’re really serious about killing Endeavour,” she says, voice muffled against the fabric of his jacket. “Then come back here again and fight me.”

Dabi draws back, peering down at her, and Katsuki stares steadily back at him.

“You were a child the last time you fought him seriously.” Her voice comes out rough. “I fight him daily. I might not have his size or quirk but – I can copy his style easily enough.”

“I thought you didn’t want anything to do with the League of Villains.”

“No.” She presses her palm flat against his chest. “But I want you to live. Idiot.”

-

Katsuki startles awake at a hand touching her shoulder, jerking away and looking up sharply to find Fuyumi with her hand still extended, mouth moving.

She reaches up to drag her headphones off.

“Everything okay?”

She blinks at the younger woman, taking in the worried crease of her brow, the unsure way she clasps her hands together in-front of her.

“’s fine,” Katsuki mutters, dragging a hand through her hair. “Dinner ready?”

“Mm, Father just arrived home too. He’s taking a shower and then he’s joining us.” Fuyumi offers her a small smile. “You’ve been asleep all afternoon, I didn’t want to wake you up but-“

“Food is important,” Katsuki finishes, rubbing at her eyes. “’preciate it.”

“You want a moment?” Fuyumi asks and Katsuki realises a bit belatedly that the other had been firmly, but politely, keeping her eyes away from her body.

She huffs an amused breath because she hadn’t bothered to put anything other than her boxes on after her bath with Dabi.

“I’ll get dressed and join you in a sec.”

The door closes behind the other and Katsuki drags herself into a sitting position, fighting back a yawn with a tired roll of her tense shoulder and pressing her palm down against her neck with a brief grimace.

Her sleep had been restless, clearly, even if she couldn’t remember what she’d dreamt of.

“For fuck’s sake, brain,” she grumps.

-

“A fund raiser?” Katsuki echoes with a furrow of her brow.

“That sounds amazing!” Fuyumi’s hands claps together. “We haven’t been to one of those in *years*.”

“What brought this on?” Katsuki wonders with a side-ways glance at Fuyumi before focusing on Endeavour where he sits at the end of the table, his red hair still wet and a towel around his shoulders.

She’d planted herself beside him, as usual, taking the time to dress in a black undershirt beneath the orange hoodie in case of any surprise... glowiness.

He looks at her, his gaze steady, and she blinks at his mouth tips up ever so slightly. "I can take a hint," he tells her, voice rumbling.

Her fingers twitches around the chopsticks and she snorts before shoving sushi into her mouth, chewing it down as Fuyumi leant forward to eagerly ask for details, eyes bright.

-

Katsuki leans back to press her palms flat against the ground, feeling the stretch of the scarring on her chest before she pressed up into a handstand, before landing neatly back on her feet in an easy fluid motion that she wouldn't have been capable of just a month back.

She rolls her shoulders, flexes her bare toes, getting a sense for her body before straightening up.

Calm, she reminds herself as she faces Endeavour where he stands, his feet equally bare, towering above her in t-shirt and grey sweatpants, arms crossed, no flames to be seen.

She knows how fast that will change, the rising temperature already making sweat bead on her neck, and she breathes in the hot air, feeling the way it fills her lungs, dry on her tongue.

Calm.

She breathes out.

"You-" She licks her lips. "You keep telling me to *use* my anger." She swallows her pride as she raises her chin. "Teach me," she demands.

There's something like approval in his gaze but also a knowing sort of thing, as if he'd just been waiting for her to ask, and it makes something ugly bubble up inside of her as she clenches her fists tight.

"Tomorrow," he tells her. "We're taking this training to better place."

-

There's grass beneath her bare feet, a stretch of a dark forest beneath an early autumn moon and she stands opposite Endeavour with a shiver of anticipation and cold alike as she crouches down.

"There's no-one to disturb us here," he tells her as he cracks his knuckles, mouth curling up. "Show me your worth, girl."

She bares her teeth in a fiendish grin.

-

She slams into a tree, given no-time to re-orientate herself before she's twisting aside, the wood cracking and bursting where her head had been as she falls down on her rump in a clumsy attempt to escape it.

He looks down at her.

"Get up."

-

Her lungs burns.

"Get up."

-

She wheezes, lungs expanding painfully against her ribs.

"Get up."

Shit, Katsuki is starting to *really* hate those two words and she presses down against the ground, painfully forcing herself up to her feet where she wobbles for a moment before finding her footing.

She presses her knuckle against her nose and blows out a wad of dried blood.

"I think," she says, tongue wrapping clumsily around the words. "I have a concussion." Her world wavers and her stomach is turning on itself.

"You already vomited everything up," Endeavour tells her mercilessly.

"My stomach acid disagrees," Katsuki says as he wavers into two and then back as she squints at him.

Her eyes widens when he's the first to move and she swears as she slams off an explosion, rocking to the side and twisting to intercept the fist moving towards her-

-

Endeavour's fist slams into her chest but her nails are already clawing

into his arm, feet wrapping around it, her body slick with sweat and nitroglycerin both like a particularly stubborn eel as she uses her weight and a timed explosion of her feet to force him down on one knee, nearly losing her grip-

She's slammed into the grass a second later with enough force that air is forced violently out of her lungs but she grasps for sanity and reason, clinging stubbornly to it as her world dips and wavers, locking onto his blue eyes even as the ghostly wound of phantom hurt pounds in her chest and she bares her teeth.

His mouth stretches out in response and Katsuki slams off an explosion, rolling with a whiplash of force across the field and stumbling to her feet, the ground smoking where a fist of fire had slammed down.

Breathe, she reminds herself as she presses her palm flat against her chest, where the knife had robbed her of one life, where All For One had-

Focus on something when you find your world slipping; that had been Best Jeanist's advice when he'd gone over it with her and she focuses on the pain of the bruises mottled on her skin, the way the air burns in her lungs, drying her mouth, blood dripping from her nose, her lips cracking and flaking.

She wipes sweat away from her eyes before crouching down, nearly on her four because he's a tall man and she's not afraid to play dirty.

"You can't ignore your anger." His voice makes her hackles rise. "Your mistake is in pushing it down where it grows to explode wild and untamed until it overwhelms you. It makes you sloppy when you give in to it." His eyes track her as she circles him. "You're not in control of it, instead you're letting it control you."

"Fuck you," she growls out roughly, wrapping her anger around her, letting it sharpen her into a weapon as more and more nitroglycerin drips out of her palms and feet.

"You have to use it."

Fire rolls off his face, burning bright against the spread of darkness behind him and around them, a pillar of brightness.

She explodes into motion, the ground shaking with the force of the large fire that propels her forwards, one arm drawn back, red eyes

burning brilliant as they collide, nitroglycerin crackling up her skin, her sweat sizzling from the heat-

“Let it consume you and then – find the calm in the storm and embrace it!”

Her fist slams against his, everything loud and violent, fire roaring around them both, explosions ringing loud as anger violent and desperate rises in a furious hoarse shout-

-

“Get up.”

Katsuki, twists her palm around against the ground to give him the middle finger.

-

“Here-“ Fuyumi turns her face gently between her palms, studying her handy-work. “That should do it!” she says with satisfaction, releasing her, and Katsuki resists the urge to rub at her skin.

“Thanks,” she says instead, leaning back and looking at the mirror.

Fuyumi had done a great job covering up the dark bruises that had shadowed her eyes from her broken nose and she wrinkles it, satisfied that the swelling had gone down from half-sleeping on a cold-compress.

“Katsuki-chan, I don’t want to overstep but-“ She glances at the younger girl as she folds her fingers together in her lap. “The training between you and father-“

“It’s fine,” Katsuki interrupts her with a roll of her shoulders.

“You’re bruised from head to toe,” Fuyumi tells her, arms wrapping around her chest. “You’re walking with a limp and your breathing is hoarse.”

Endeavour hadn’t been holding back but shit, Katsuki is actually learning to keep up with him in a desperate sort of feverish game of using her explosions to maximize her movement to compensate for his much heavier force.

Endeavour isn’t built for speed but *hell* he waits and he reacts, no movement wasted, and that’s something she want for herself.

“When Touya-“ Fuyumi bites down on her lower lip. “He was always rougher with Touya, expected and wanted too much from him, and now-“

“He’s helping me.” Katsuki pushes out of the chair, straightening up and towering above her and pauses as she catches a minute flinch from the other, arms drawing tighter across her chest. “I mean it,” she makes an awkward attempt at gentling her voice, dragging a hand through her hair. “I know it looks bad but – can you take my word for it?” She searches the grey eyes of the younger woman. “He’s not doing anything I haven’t asked of him.”

“That doesn’t make it *right*,” Fuyumi says quietly. “I don’t like seeing you hurt like this.”

“I’m visiting Recovery Girl on Saturday-“

“That’s not what I meant and you know it!” The sudden sharp tone catches her off-guard, shoulders twitching back as hands reaches out to grab hold of them, and Fuyumi looks up at her, eyes clearly worried. “We’re friends, aren’t we, Katsuki-chan?” No, Katsuki thinks, perhaps unfavourably so because she feels some sort of way about the younger woman. “I know my father. I know what he’s capable of, what he did to Touya and Shouto and that – it wasn’t *right*. I know that.” Fingers digs into her shoulders and Katsuki’s skin crawls uncomfortably at the feeling.

“Let go off me.”

A tremble runs through the body of the younger woman in-front of her before she abruptly releases her, stepping back, hands rising to lift her glasses and wipe at her eyes as she turned away.

“I’m sorry, I shouldn’t have- I’m just worried.”

“This isn’t about me,” Katsuki says keenly, taking in the tightening of slim shoulders. “You did your best to keep this family together but your brothers are angry and hurt and your father can’t muster up as much as an apology despite everything he’s done.” She takes a step towards the other. “You’re stuck here because you still have hope that something will change because you weren’t *enough* and you feel guilty for not doing more.”

“I don’t like seeing him doing the same to you that he did to them,” Fuyumi says tightly with regret in her voice. “I should have protected them, especially Shouto, he was so *young*. And Touya- he tried to

protect us but I couldn't do the same for him." Grief colours her voice heavily.

Katsuki huffs a tired breath because shit, what a situation.

What would you do if you knew your older brother is still alive? she wonders, staring at the younger woman. Shouto had been young but Fuyumi is twenty-two, Dabi had admitted to being twenty-five, which means that there had only been a few years between them.

Out of the Todoroki siblings she was likely the one to remember him the clearest.

"You and your brothers were children and your father were the one who were supposed to protect them. I don't have that relationship with him and we have an understanding – it's not the same thing. But—" She hesitates. "For what it's worth, I'm sorry," she says lamely. "I came here knowing things weren't okay in this house and I took the name of your brother because I knew it would stir shit up."

It's not the only reason, Katsuki admits to herself. Dabi had thrown off the name Todoroki Touya but she'd selfishly wanted to keep something of him for herself and it wasn't like he was using it anyway.

She'd made his past her future and she likes the glimmer of humour in his eyes, the fond sort of amusement that told her he knew exactly why she'd picked it out of all the names.

"I know I'm dredging up memories, that's the *point*." Katsuki folds her arms across her chest. "You're allowed to be upset about it."

"No—" Fuyumi shakes her head, peering up at her. "I know why you're doing it, I'm not blind to the way you get under his skin. Few have dared to do that since Touya." Her smile is sad. "He hated our father as much as he loved him and sought his approval desperately." She hesitates but- "Do you think I'm foolish for staying? For hoping that- we'll be a family again?"

Katsuki shrugs because what the hell is she supposed to say? She'd loved her parents but shit had been messy for many years between them and she'd screwed things up thoroughly with his.

"Hell if I know. Family is complicated stuff." She shoves her hands into the pockets of her slacks. "Endeavour is trying to change but he's failing miserably at understanding he needs to start with his family. As long as he refuses to admit to being at fault for what he did to you

there's no helping things. It's on him to make the first move and accept that they might never forgive him."

"Shouto has always been a gentle soul," Fuyumi says quietly. "Even Natsuo- I don't think they ever stopped caring." It's a frail sort of hope, and perhaps she's been clinging to it, but she's twenty-two almost twenty-three now.

Everyone gets tired at some point.

"And what about you?" Katsuki asks with a tip of her head. "Have you forgiven him?"

Fuyumi looks away, hands clenching tight.

Katsuki throws one last look into the mirror, baring her teeth to the dark glower of her red eyes.

-

Black slacks, a sharp black shirt and a soft pink vest over it had been her final pick for the evening. It had been chosen after Fuyumi had shown her the dress she'd picked-out and her vest is a near exact shade to match it.

It's a pretty dress, long and layered at the skirt with the bust patterned elegantly in a lighter shade of pink and her heels clacks against the ground as she approaches them.

Endeavour stands behind her, arms folded across his chest.

"About tim--"

Katsuki tips her head back to look at him, severely unimpressed.

He pauses, clears his throat and looks back at his daughter.

"You look a lot like your mother," he tells her, tone still hard, dressed in black with a red button-down, having foregone a jacket like Katsuki, his tie black. "You should take a picture and send to her. I'm sure it'd make her happy." It's a grudging sort of thing.

Fuyumi brightens, the smile spreading pretty across her face.

"We should take a picture together!" She turns to Katsuki who blinks. "You don't mind, do you?"

Endeavour looks to the clock but while his mouth turns briefly down he offers no resistance as Katsuki fishes up her phone and Fuyumi steps towards her father, just shy of touching him as she adjusts the skirt of her dress and straightens up, pressing up her glasses where they'd slipped down.

He stares down at her for a long moment before slowly placing one large hand down on her shoulder.

Have you forgiven him?

Katsuki stares at Fuyumi's smiling face through the camera and presses down to take the picture, something dark in her chest.

-

Katsuki offers her arm to Fuyumi who takes it with a grateful smile.

"We're not staying any longer than necessary," Endeavour says with some distaste as he looks up at the large mansion where people are already crowding and chatting on the steps leading up. "Try to behave."

"We'll stay out of trouble," Fuyumi promises, tightening her hold on Katsuki's arm. "Try to have fun!"

Endeavour's look says exactly how much *fun* he thinks this is going to be, people having already caught sight of him, a few daring ones approaching as Katsuki gives Fuyumi a tug because *hell* if she's getting dragged into the middle of *that*.

"People are going to be curious about you too, you know?" Fuyumi says as they make their way up the winding staircase to the large mansion. "Father made quite the speech after he took you on and you haven't really made a public appearance since."

"They can shove their curiosity in a ditch," Katsuki mutters back, peering idly around because-

This is Ponytail's family home and shit, she knew the girl was rich but this is *rich* rich levels of *what the fuck*.

Did anyone really need this much money? There were people living paycheck to paycheck and scrambling to keep food on the table and these people had gold gleaming in the white marble statues rising tall at either side of the entrance.

It's of two people she distantly recognises as having been quite a famous pair of Heroes a few generations back, chins raised tall where they look down upon them as they step into the hall.

Katsuki finds her jacket stolen away by a silent man who bows with a gesture further inside and Fuyumi looks around them both in awe after offering her own to another one with a brief *thank you*.

Elegance is the theme of the evening, the roof high above them, marble decorating the walls, pillars rising, a red rug leading their steps into the grand hall where those in grand suits and dresses are mingling together.

She spots one or two Heroes in their get-ups, grinning and chatting up admirers who reaches out to brush against their arms and sides.

She wrinkles her nose, the pain a ghostly comfort.

"At least try to look happy," Fuyumi admonishes her as she graciously steals two glasses of champagne of a passing waited and offers her one. "These kinds of things are all about making a good first impression."

"People had a lot of first impressions of me lying at the feet of All For One and vomiting all over All Might's shiny shoes," Katsuki grumps because she'd seen those videos, filmed from a safe distance on shaky phones because *apparently* people had fucked-up priorities.

"And now you have a chance to make a new one." Fuyumi presses one glass into her hand. "Now, *smile*."

To Katsuki's horror Fuyumi raises her hand and waves down one of the press folk who had clearly been lurking close and who looks *entirely* too happy too happy to approach them both.

"Todoroki Fuyumi and, *Touya* Katsuki is it now, right?" The woman grins at them both. "When I heard that Endeavour-san was bringing someone along I certainly wasn't expecting *this*."

"The fuck did you-" Fuyumi elbows her in her ribs and Katsuki wheezes because *shit*.

"Umiko-san!" Fuyumi greets pleasantly as Katsuki resists rubbing at her chest, focusing instead on the reporter who were dressed in a slim black thing with flats instead of heels, most likely to be able sneak up on unsuspecting victims. "It's been too long since we last spoke."

Katsuki meets green eyes and only just resists baring her teeth.

Whatever the woman's quirk was it had given her dark green marks stretching out over the right side of her face, glowing mutely, one eyebrow matching in colour, the other as dark as her hair. Despite her smile there's dark rings beneath her eyes and her face looks rather like it was struggling to keep it on.

Katsuki suspects that her normal resting face might be one of blank boredom – there's just something about the way everything in her face looks like it's struggling to be pulled down that makes for a decidedly weird combination.

“Endeavour-san has been keeping you away from me, it's been rough without you,” Green, as Katsuki dubiously slots her as, says with a hand pressing against her chest. “I'd love to catch-up but work would *really* want me to get an interview with Touya-san here.”

Fuyumi makes a thoughtful kind of sound. “Katsuki-chan is still recovering from *everything* you know, it wouldn't be fair to overwhelm her with all the attention,” she hedges, tugging Katsuki a bit closer, almost protectively despite having been the one to call the woman over in the first place.

“Of course! I understand it wasn't an easy thing – I mean, kidnapping, and then the whole mess with All Might- No, it wouldn't be right to harass her about it!” Green nods her head and makes a show of looking around before leaning closer. “How about we make this an exclusive thing and I'll call in some favours and make sure the two of you aren't bothered for the rest of the night? Just a few questions from me, the people are curious, you understand? They want to know all about Endeavour's new intern and how you're holding up after everything.” This she directs to Katsuki who a bit belatedly remembers that, as far as this woman is concerned, she's only sixteen.

“I'm so glad you understand me, Umiko-san.” Fuyumi's smile is kind but her eyes are sharp. “I've only known Katsuki-chan here for a few months but she's a close friend of my little brother. They were in the same class and all. I can't help but feel a bit protective.”

Katsuki gives her a dry look that gets ignored.

“Perfectly understandable and quite admirable of you. Touya-san is certainly lucky to have someone like you looking out for her.” Green takes a step back with a gesture, eyes gleaming. “How about we take this a bit more private?”

“Of course, Umiko-san,” Fuyumi says with a demure smile.

Green mouths twitches up and Katsuki only just resists digging her heels in as Fuyumi presses a hand against her lower back and gives her a little push forward.

-

“Why *her*?” Katsuki hisses quietly as they follow Green down a long hall.

“I’ve known Umiko-san for years,” Fuyumi tells her in a low voice. “She’s usually the one who does Father’s private interviews.”

“And?” Katsuki presses.

“She won’t push you to answer anything you don’t want to answer.” Fuyumi doesn’t look at her, keeping her gaze on Green’s back where she walks a few steps in front of them. “And she won’t twist what you say either.” Fuyumi glances briefly at her. “This isn’t something you can avoid. Father hates the press but even he knows better than to ignore them because that’s when they start making things up or draw their own conclusions. Trust me when I say you don’t want that.”

Katsuki bites down on the inside of her cheek.

“I know you’re a private person, and I understand the reason for it.” Fuyumi squeezes her arm gently where she’s still holding onto her. “But this is my area. I grew up with the press, it’s hard to avoid when your father is one of the top Heroes. This way you only have to do it once and then you can enjoy the rest of the evening.”

Katsuki doesn’t like the media – there’s too much falsehood, salivating news making headlines of people’s loss and suffering, deaths ignored to keep feeding the glory of Heroism.

She has no idea who this *Green* is.

But Fuyumi-

Katsuki downs her champagne and stretches out to drop it on one of the tables they pass by, ignoring the sharp looks from the pair there as she rolls her shoulders back and stretches her back straight.

“Okay,” she breathes out, firming her resolve. “Let’s get this over with.”

Chapter End Notes

Well, well, looks like we've got another chapter up and rolling.

A lot of things going down in this chapter and we're nearing Shouto and Natsuo both coming home for the weekend.

I know that, in canon, Natsuo and Shouto's anger at Endeavour are given more space than Fuyumi's feelings about it all because she's taken the spot of mediator - the only one desperately trying to keep their family together. I don't think things are so easy or true for how things would play out in reality.

She was the one closest Touya - the one who shouldered the most with him gone when Natsuo wanted nothing more than to get away and Shouto stuck due to his age until he, too, left. It makes it easy to overlook her struggles because it's a self-sacrificial role to take.

I don't know - I have a lot of thoughts about it that will get to be explored because abuse is a complicated topic and she's in a spot where she's getting confronted with how *fine* she really is.

In a world where Heroism and the media is so tightly interwoven it would be foolish to think you can avoid it forever. My own pet theory around is it that U.A. makes sure to keep their students out of it as much as they can - Katsuki doesn't have that to fall back on.

I've caught up with a good deal of your comments and slowly working my way through the last few chapters but I wanted to get this posted for you guys! Your love and support is amazing and it's so fun to chat with you all.

This has been chapter 70 of In The End and I'm on tumblr as artsy-death if you want to say hi there.

I hope you enjoyed!

Waltz To Your Own Mayhem

Chapter Notes

Green = Umiko-san (Reporter)

Ponytail = Yaoyorozu Momo

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

"You mind if I take a picture before we begin?" Green asks after they'd found a corner that is decently free of people.

Behind them are large glass windows with elegantly draped curtains and Fuyumi releases her hold on her, folding her hands behind her back as she takes her place just a step away from Green.

Katsuki grimaces but reluctantly steps up to place her back against the window as Green grabs the camera around her neck and holds it up. "A bit to the left-" She shifts. "Perfect! And try to smile." A pause. "Or at least look a bit less grumpy." Green peers up at her over the camera.

It takes her a moment to find the right muscles to pull her face into something decently flat and Green stares at her for a moment longer before snapping a picture and lowering it down.

"I know not everyone enjoys this kind of thing," she says sympathetically. "But-"

"What's your quirk," Katsuki interrupts because it's been gnawing on her, the dark green glow unmistakable in her face.

"A fair question!" Green presses her hands together, spreading her fingers out. "It's nothing nefarious, I assure you. My quirk is called *Nightglow*. It charges up from the sun-" She drags a finger down one of the glowing lines on her face. "And I can then focus it into my eye-" She presses down beneath her green one. "To allow myself to see in the dark, or push it out in a bright flash." Katsuki relaxes an inch. "You probably know it already but anything that can be categorized under coercive quirks are banned from the press. It's considered unethical." Green taps her finger against her mouth. "So don't worry!"

Katsuki *did* know that but she doesn't necessarily trust that someone wouldn't make an attempt pushing it. Quirk laws were rarely reliable – there were too much variation in quirks to make sensible for-all

rules.

She shoves her hands into her pockets.

“Alright.”

“You mind if I take notes?”

“Go for it.”

Green pulls her phone from her pocket and slides out a pen from the bottom of it.

“So first thing first-“ Her eyes fixates keenly on her. “How have you been holding up? It’s quite the change to go from a first year student on the Hero Course to being, what is essentially, a sidekick.”

Katsuki glances at Fuyumi who gives her an encouraging smile.

“It’s been... fine.”

Green keeps looking expectantly at her and Katsuki’s skin crawls uncomfortably.

“We’re doing a lot of training together,” she says after searching her mind desperately for something to say.

“I understand you’re staying in the Todoroki household?” Green pursues.

“Yeah,” Katsuki agrees with another glance at Fuyumi before focusing fully on Green. “It’s been... interesting.”

“Katsuki-chan does a lot of the cooking,” Fuyumi adds as Katsuki fails to add anything more. “And she trains with father twice a day.”

“Personal training with the Number One Hero himself? Now that’s quite the thing!” Green makes a note with a brief smile at Fuyumi. “And cooking as well? Sounds like you’re fitting right in then.”

“Sure.” Katsuki rubs a hand against her neck, not liking the situation at all because her business is *her* fucking business and the idea of having people reading about it over their morning coffee is making her want to snatch the phone right out of Green’s hand.

But she’s not so foolish to not understand that Fuyumi had made a good point about controlling the flow of information – especially

when her name was already being dragged through the mud.

“What about your parents? They must be quite proud to have their daughter taken under the wing of the new Number One Hero.”

Katsuki’s shoulders draws tight.

“Yeah. Proud,” she says roughly.

Green pauses with her pen over her phone and Katsuki bites down on the inside of her cheek, glowering back, daring her to pursue it further.

The other woman clears her throat. “Well, I know it must be quite hard to talk about, but your kidnapping made the news for the week you were gone.” Katsuki’s shoulders lowers an inch. “Do you know why they picked you out of everyone?”

This, at least, she can answer. “They wanted someone from 1-A,” she says with a shrug. “I won the Sports Festival so why *not* me.”

“Some say it’s because of your temper.” Katsuki narrows her eyes. “You have to admit you didn’t make the most approachable impression,” Green presses.

“I’d like to see what you’d do if someone put you in chains and muzzled you in live television,” Katsuki growls out, nails digging into her thighs. “I didn’t join them, did I?” she says harshly. “I don’t know what fucking else you want me to-“

“Katsuki-chan.”

She snaps her mouth shut with a grimace as she looks away, glaringly mulishly down the hallway.

“You are right, of course,” Green says after a long moment of silence. “And I’d be quite angry, too, if someone tried to blame me for getting kidnapped.”

“*Someone* was getting kidnapped,” Katsuki bites out, reluctantly shifting her gaze back. “It happened to me, not a whole fucking lot I could do about that.”

“How would you describe your relationship with All Might?”

“He was my teacher, that’s the extent of it.” Katsuki blows out a harsh

breath. “I *appreciate* the sacrifice he made but whoever this All For One is it sure had little to do with me in the first place. I was just a very convenient way to draw him out.” She chews her words over. “Better me than the rest of the class getting dragged into it,” she says finally. “And I bet he feels the same way.”

“How so?” Green asks, scrawling something down.

“The whole U.S.J. thing was a disaster, wasn’t it? And then they found us in the forest too.” Katsuki turns to face her properly. “This way he didn’t have to worry about getting the whole class to safety. There was just me.”

“So what you’re saying is that you appreciate that it was *you* instead of your classmates?”

That is a very favourable way of translating her words and Katsuki raises an eyebrow but- “Yeah,” she agrees. “The League stopped their attack once they got their hands on me and no-one died. That’s a favourable outcome if I ever saw one.”

Green grins at her. “I agree.”

-

“I normally don’t give out my personal number,” Green tells her afterwards as she turns her business card around to scrawl down a row of numbers with a flourished dot at the end. “But you strike me as the kind of person who won’t contact me unless there’s something interesting at play so I’m going to make an exception.”

She clicks the pen and slides it back into her purse before she turns it around, offering it between two fingers.

“Why bother?” Katsuki asks warily as she stares down at it.

“Because, now that I’ve met you, I am only more firmly convinced that my colleagues have been unfair to you in the way this entire situation surrounding the Kamino-incident has been treated.” Green crosses her free arm across her chest. “To be blunt with you, there’s something that doesn’t strike me as quite right, and I think there’s a lot that the press simply isn’t privy to. Who was this All For One? Why did he know All Might? I’ve done my research and this kind of Villain doesn’t just pop up from nowhere but- there’s frustrating little information about.” Her brow dips thoughtfully. “Perhaps rightfully so, I cannot say, but I like knowing the entire situation before I make

my own judgement."

Katsuki gives her a sceptical look but Green merely sighs before offering a smile as she reluctantly snags the number.

"I know, I know – it sounds odd for someone of the press, I'm not blind to the bad reputation we have, and a lot of the news are..." Her mouth flattens out. "You know what I'm talking about, Fuyumi-san."

"When people are less interested in knowing the truth because the lie is more spectacular it makes a dangerous thing," Fuyumi says, inclining her head. "It's why I admire you, Umiko-san."

Green grins at her. "You've always been my favourite – such a cute child and an absolutely charming and clever young woman you've become." A brief second of hesitation and then, quieter. "You are a lot like your mother in that regard – it's tragic, the way things went down."

Fuyumi folds her hands together. "She's been doing better lately. Shouto started visiting her and there's talk about maybe letting her home for a weekend. As a trial run. Natsuo promised to be home for it."

Green considers her, fingers tapping against her bicep, eyes sliding briefly to Katsuki.

"She lives with us, Umiko-san," Fuyumi offers with a brief glance at her and Katsuki furrows her brows because Fuyumi gives a small, barely noticeable, shake of her head.

"Ah." Green draws a breath. "Your father-"

"Wouldn't be home," Fuyumi says simply. "He knows and he agrees with it. He's giving her the space she needs to recover at her own pace."

"I thought you said she did his personal interviews." Katsuki's voices cautiously, watching Fuyumi from the corner of her eye.

"I am privy to a lot of information, Touya-san." Katsuki turns sharply towards Green. "But I am not all-knowing. Rei and I went to the same private school together but we lost contact with each other after her marriage. I had no idea things had gotten as bad as it had in that house, not until Todoroki Touya was proclaimed dead and my once best friend put in a mental hospital after hurting her youngest son."

Something vindictive flares thought Katsuki and it's an ugly thing because she really shouldn't be happy about being *right*. But she fucking *knew* something had been off about Shouto's scar and to have it so blatantly confirmed-

"I will always regret not being able to do more," Green says heavily. "If I'd just seen the *signs* then maybe Rei wouldn't have lost it like that. Endeavour-san must have been devastated."

"It's not your fault," Fuyumi speaks up as Katsuki's mind blanks because-

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"She doesn't know about the abu-"

"Umiko-san was a close friend of my mother and she admires my father." A fine line of tension is visible in her shoulders. "She was there when they married and she encouraged Mom to be there and support her husband. She does not know everything, no. She thinks Mom got too overwhelmed with juggling life as the wife of a Pro-Hero and too many children and that she blames my father for not doing more."

Katsuki stares at her.

"Well, that's fucked-up," she says bluntly because *what the hell*. "Why the fuck are you trusting her at all?"

"Umiko-san feels guilty." Fuyumi meets her gaze, grey eyes regarding her. "She wants what is best for my family."

Something cold crawls momentarily down her back before she snorts, dragging a hand through her hair and scrubbing down as she glances down the hallway.

"Anything to protect what is left, huh?" she breathes. "I can respect that."

"You did well." Fuyumi slides her arm into hers and Katsuki allows it a bit grudgingly.

"I need a drink," she admits roughly.

-

Katsuki is the first to spot her, pausing at the familiar dark hair pulled

into a very familiar ponytail.

Ponytail is talking with an elderly couple, her smile soft, dressed in a fancy but modest long periwinkle blue dress that stands out.

She realises the second Ponytail catches sight of her because her eyes widens and she hastily, but with decorum, extracts herself from the conversation to soft laughs from the couple who gives her a small *shooing* motion before she twirls around to hurry over.

“Touya-san!” Ponytail catches sight of Fuyumi, realisation crossing her face as she breathes in a bit startled. “You’re-“

“You can call me Fuyumi,” she says without missing a beat, smile warm. “You must be one of Shouto’s classmates.”

“Yaoyorozu Momo,” she introduces herself with a bow. “But just Yaomomo is fine, it’s what everyone calls me,” she tacks on as she straightens up, clearly still a bit startled.

“Yaomomo-san then,” Fuyumi agrees, smile growing. “It’s quite the lovely evening, we’ve been having a wonderful time.”

Ponytail glances to her at this and Katsuki gives her a dry look that gains her a small flush.

“I’m glad to hear that,” Ponytail tells them both and she does seem to mean it. “Mom and Dad worked hard to put it all together.”

“The champagne is good,” Katsuki mutters, taking a sip of her fourth one.

Fuyumi snorts, loudly, and then covers her mouth, pink spreading across her cheeks as Katsuki gives her a look of amusement because- if she’s counted right then the other is on her fifth. “It is good,” she agrees with a clearing of her throat. “Why don’t I leave you two catch up and I’ll go grab myself some water.” The last bit is breathed in a low voice.

Katsuki’s mouth twitches as Fuyumi bids them both a hasty good bye.

“You two seem to be getting along,” Ponytail muses thoughtfully as she follows Fuyumi’s back through the gathering of people until she’s out of sight. “She looks a lot like Todoroki-san.”

“It’s the hair,” Katsuki says, swallowing down the last of her

champagne and switching it with a full glass on a passing waiter's tray as they dutifully turned into a spin mid-movement to allow it.

Katsuki gives him a mildly impressed look as he continued on without a missed step.

"They're not really meant for anyone under twenty, you know?" Ponytail points out.

"I'm thirty."

"I- yes, of course." She peers around but seems to resign herself to it as she focuses back on her. "I'm really happy to see you here, actually," Ponytail admits. "We... haven't really been able to talk, just the two of us, after everything that happened at Kamino."

Katsuki, who is in quite the mellow mood from the alcohol, hums.

"I didn't know it was something you wanted," she says idly.

Although, considering everything that had gone down, that's... yeah, Katsuki can admit she screwed up there. These kids had tracked her down and tried to get her out of the League's hands and instead they'd stepped into a right mess and she hadn't offered as much as an explanation.

She looks into Ponytail's dark eyes and something bubbles up inside of her.

"Want to dance?" she blurts out.

Ponytail blinks at her. "Dance?" she repeats nonplussed, one hand curling into the side of her dress as she glances back to the dance floor where a handful of couples are moving in time to the music played by a live orchestra.

There are those with visible quirks, hooves clacking instead of heels, spots and colours, limbs deformed and chests too large or too small expanding with their breaths. Desirable quirks and undesirable ones, fake polite smiles and cunning eyes in a world of money.

"More privacy than talking here," Katsuki shrugs, offering her hand with a bow of her back, the other curling with the back of her hand pressing against her lower back.

Ponytail hesitates for a moment but then slides her smaller hand into

hers, softer than her own but rough where callouses had developed from her training.

It's been years since Katsuki had done any sort of dancing but Amélie had loved it and she steps back, tugging Ponytail along, something playful flaring through her when the younger considers her with clear surprise as she draws her close, settling one hand on her hip and stretching out their arms.

Ponytail places her hand on her shoulder in turn and Katsuki steps into familiar movement.

She had done both roles through her life, learning and then teaching James in turn when they were nineteen and invited to her uncle's wedding, and Ponytail gives a startled laugh as Katsuki spins her around, arm rising up and then drawing her closer as they found their path into the middle of the other dancers.

"You keep surprising me," Ponytail breathes out, mouth curling up as she follows easily with her steps.

"I know to have fun," Katsuki says with a twitch of her lips. "Occasionally." She steps into a swooping turn and Ponytail matches her perfectly, the tail of her dress flaring out. "So, what is it that you wanted to talk about?"

"That Villain, Dabi." Ponytail regards her intently, apparently not interested in dancing around the subject which – *fair enough*. "You knew him."

"Yeah," Katsuki admits, because that would be fucking ridiculous to deny at this point. "We met four, almost five years ago."

"You love him."

Katsuki nearly misses a step but catches herself, dipping Ponytail into a low turn before straightening them both up.

"Went right for the heart there, did ya?" she drawls, fingers twitching against the warmth of the other's hip. "I care for him and Himiko both and I've known them for a long time." She hesitates, mouth curling down. "I struggled when I first came to this world. Dabi... he helped me come to terms with a shitty situation."

"You don't want him to be a Villain, do you?" Ponytail presses, eyes searching hers, and Katsuki hums.

“No,” she says. “I don’t. But I understand his reasons for it, even if I think he’s making all the wrong choices.”

“He’s Todoroki-san’s older brother,” Ponytail says without hesitation or doubt as she steps into the turn she leads her into.

Katsuki blinks at her. “What-“

“Todoroki-san recognised him.” Ponytail’s brows dips, but she doesn’t miss a step as Katsuki tugs her into a looping spin to get them away from a pair who had been swaying closer, steps a tad clumsy from one too many drinks. “I did some searching, afterwards, and according to everything I could find Todoroki Touya died several years ago in an accident when he lost control of his quirk. But- he didn’t, and he never returned home either.” She raises her gaze as Katsuki takes them into a spin. “He called Endeavour *abusive*.” The shift of her tone is hard to understand, her eyes giving little away. “But I suspect you won’t tell me anymore about it.”

“Yeah,” Katsuki admits gruffly. “It’s not really in my place to spread shit around.”

“Todoroki-san is staying in the dorms now, so I know he’s safe, but you and Fuyumi-san-“

“Are perfectly safe,” Katsuki cuts her off. “I’m not so shitty that I would stand around and do nothing if that wasn’t the case.”

“I understand.” Ponytail lowers her gaze, teeth sinking into her lower lip. “Todoroki-san is a private person but it’s clear that he’s missed his brother. He’s been quiet and spends a lot of time studying on his own since school started again. I... worry for him,” she says halting. “He’s trying to pretend nothing has changed but it must have turned his world around to find out that his brother wasn’t only alive but one of the Villains who’d targeted our class.” She meets Katsuki’s eyes steadily. “You’re not the only one affected here.” There’s a challenge in her world and Katsuki flashes her teeth, amused by her daring.

“I am aware.” She tips her head. “But what do you expect me to do about it?”

“Talk to him,” Ponytail answers without hesitation.

“Already planning to,” Katsuki says as she steps into a turn. “I’m going with Fuyumi to pick him up at U.A. tomorrow.” *And get some fucking healing from Recovery Girl.*

Endeavour hadn't said anything when she invited herself along, merely glancing at her from his position at the head of the table.

"Good," Ponytail says with clear relief, shoulders relaxing down. "If there's anyone who understands what he's going through at the moment, it's you, isn't it?"

"I'm an only child," Katsuki snorts. "So hell if I can say what it means to realize the brother you thought were dead isn't, you know, *dead*. But I get where you're coming from." She twirls Ponytail into a spin, before drawing her close again, their movement perfectly matched. "You're the one who is stuck with him at school though. Talk to him. He might get snappish, he might not say anything at all, but it's better than just leaving him to wallow on his own."

"Speaking from experience?"

"Mina is... a force of nature," Katsuki huffs as she makes a turn, Ponytail's back dipping briefly with it. "I owe her a lot."

"Don't let her hear you say that," Ponytail cautions her. "She didn't become your friend for you to owe her anything."

"I know." Katsuki's chest twists. "I've never met anyone like her before in my life." It's the raw truth of the matter and not something she's ashamed of admitting to.

Ponytail is quiet for a moment before something settles in her gaze. "Switch?"

Katsuki blinks but when Ponytail releases her shoulder she only hesitates for a moment before shifting her own grip, her palm settling on a bare shoulder, Ponytail's hand settling on her hip, opposite hands folding together.

It's not the one where her first scar lingers but something swoops briefly through her all the same even as she allows Ponytail to take the lead.

There's not much of a height difference between them but with Ponytail's heels she has the upper-hand on her and she easily shifts to draw her into a double looped spin, her movement smooth as she follows, stepping side-ways, quickening the dance as the music picks up in pace.

"I don't know how to put this so I'm going to be straightforward with

you.” A breath. “We aren’t friends, I know that.” Ponytail steps her into a quick spin, skirt flaring out. “I admired your skill in fighting, envied it in some ways, because how easy you made it look. But your temper is volatile and you were unapproachable and distant, hardly willing to give anyone the time out of your day. I did not think you suited for Hero-work.” It’s not something Katsuki hasn’t heard before. “But-“ Ponytail says, voice softening. “I saw the change Mina-san brought out in you and I realise that- things were perhaps more complicated than my first impression of you had given impression of. And as it turned out, that was very much the case.”

“What are you getting at?” Katsuki asks warily.

“I saw you at your lowest.” The words flare a flood of embarrassment through her and Katsuki takes a jerky step back, but Ponytail follows her, forcing her to catch the motion into a side-way dip and Katsuki-

Katsuki quite suddenly regrets asking her to dance at all.

“I’m not *weak*,” Katsuki hisses out, something livid bubbling up inside of her because how *fucking dare-*

“No,” Ponytail agrees and Katsuki finds herself caught wrong-footed but Ponytail tightens her hold, catching her clumsy jerk back, and she has no choice but to follow, nails digging into a pale shoulder. “I think you’re one of the strongest people I’ve ever met,” she tells her, dark eyes searching red as Katsuki clenches her jaw tight. “You were scared.” Katsuki does not want to be here. “Terrified, even.” Her voice softens, the effortless elegance of her features gentling on her face. “And you thought you’d just been murdered.”

Ponytail studies her and Katsuki desperately craves another drink.

“You dissociated.” Ponytail gives her head a shake. “I researched it and from what I understand it’s characterised by a detachment from the world and self. But you didn’t *just* dissociate.” A pause. “You’re diagnosed with PTSD, aren’t you?”

“I am,” Katsuki admits reluctantly. “Among things.”

Ponytail nods thoughtfully. “I thought as much. You’re easily startled, always tense, don’t like to be touched, and you react with angry outbursts-“

“If you’re here to armchair diagnose me,” Katsuki growls. “You’re welcome to fucking stop *whenever*.”

Ponytail flushes. "I'm sorry, that was insensitive of me."

Katsuki's mouth flattens. "I am more than the diagnoses slapped on me."

"I know that!" Ponytail hurries to assure her. "I'm sorry, this is coming out all wrong!" Regret dips into her voice. "What I wanted to say is that- I think I understand better now that, I might have been hasty in my judgement of you."

"You've never treated me with ill-intent." Katsuki relaxes her tense fingers. "And just because my mental health is a bit fucked doesn't mean I'm not responsible for how I come across. I'm not *kind*. I am, genuinely, angry a lot of the time, and I am fully capable of being cruel without thinking twice about it."

"But that's not all you are." Ponytail steps into a turn, her grip on her hand tightening. "Do you remember what you told me, after my last internship?"

Katsuki furrows her brows but-

"No," she admits after a moment because she honestly *doesn't*.

"You told me that the next time we had anything of the sort, to ask Midnight-sensei if she had any advice. And I did." She raises her chin. "I'm aware of my privileges, Touya-san. When I first came to U.A. I was determined to do things on my own, to not use my family's wealth and connections but to grow into someone worthy of being a Hero on my own. That first Internship... It was a slap in the face." She steps hard into the next turn. "She wanted me because I was *cute* and because it means something to have the Yaoyorozu name attached to your products. It was humiliating."

Katsuki stares at her for a moment because-

Yeah, it's fucking humiliating to be reduced to nothing but a pretty face, to not be taken seriously and instead forced to put your body on display to sell something. Ponytail might only be sixteen but the way adult men and women have all been looking at her during their dance isn't something Katsuki is blind too.

"When I brought it up you told me that there were always going to be idiots." Ponytail's mouth tips up at the corner. "And those who won't take me seriously. I believe this was followed by a *fuck 'em*." She deepens her voice but there's no mockery in her gaze, just something

Katsuki hesitantly identifies as appreciation. “And I realize now that, you understood where I was coming from, because you’d gone from being an adult woman to being trapped in a child’s body. And you stepped out of your comfort zone to give me advice, unasked, because you thought it was the right thing to do.”

Ponytail offers her a hesitant smile.

“I don’t believe you’re some kind of horrible person, Touya-san.” To Katsuki’s mortification she can feel her ears grow hot. “I think you experienced something traumatic and it’s made you question a lot of things. And I think you look at the world unkindly because it wasn’t kind to you. But despite everything, you still *care*. And that takes a lot of bravery.” Ponytail slows her steps, closer now. “I am worried about Todoroki-san because he still loves his brother and realizing he’s alive and a Villain can’t be easy to handle. But you care for Dabi-san, too, and it’s clear that he cares for you. If there’s a chance, even the smallest one, that he’d abandon the path he’s on – then I want to help, if I can. Because I don’t think you’d love him if there isn’t *good* in him.”

Katsuki comes to a halt in the middle of the dance floor, people moving around them, the music playing in the background.

“I don’t think you understand quite what you’re offering.”

“No, I understand perfectly.” *Yaomomo*, that’s what she’d asked Katsuki to call her all those months back. “I want to be a Hero, Touya-san. Not because I want to make money, or because I want fame, my family name already give me enough of that. I want to be a Hero because there’s people out there who need my help.” Intelligent dark eyes gazes into hers. “And if you need my help in this, even if it’s just about money, then I want to be in a position to help you. For Mina-san, for Todoroki-san, for- Dabi-san.” A breath. “For *you*, because you deserve happiness.”

It’s such a strange sentiment, simple in its delivery, and yet-

Liar, her mind whispers. *What’s the catch? There is always a catch.*

“I’ve had weeks to think deep and hard about this. I’m not offering it on a whim.” Yaomomo’s hand is warm on her hip. “I am aware that, it’s a hard situation to judge and I do not want to find myself in a position to help someone hurt another. But I want-“ A breath. “I believe Todoroki-san deserves the right to speak to his brother and that is something that is only going to happen through you and that

means you're the one who have to make a judgement call on if it's possible and how it can happen." She shakes her head. "Maybe there's a chance he'll make another choice, maybe there's not, but- I don't want to believe someone is without hope."

"And if it doesn't work out?" Katsuki asks warily.

Yaomomo leans forward, inches taller, eyes dark and close. "Then I'll know I at least tried." Her hand tightens on her hip. "Somethings in life is more important than following rules and laws and I don't think I could forgive myself if I just stood passively by. Especially if there's an implication that one of our top Heroes-" She cuts herself off, teeth sinking into her lip. "Todoroki-san, in the beginning, he wouldn't use his fire- it wasn't until the Sports Festival I even knew he *could*. I am not blind to what that implies with what I know now, Touya-san. The fire is very much his father's quirk."

The music is changing in the background, turning into a slow close waltz, and Yaomomo takes a step forward, Katsuki matching it with a backward one, their chest pressing close as the other leads her into a turn.

"Why turn to me?" Katsuki asks with a curl of curiosity and scepticism alike. "Surely, if you want to help then it would be easier to talk to Shouto?"

"Dabi-san is his brother." Yaomomo shakes her head. "I fear that – at the end of the day he'll make a choice and he'll go off on his own instead of asking for help because he's family and he'll want to protect him. Even from the rest of 1-A." Katsuki supposes she has a point – she doesn't pretend to be an expert in what abuse does but she knows that, siblings often got overprotective of each other – a sort of *we against the world* mentality. "But he knows that you care about Dabi-san, that you're close, and that you're, perhaps, his only chance to reconnecting with his big brother. I don't believe he's learning sign language for nothing – he's *obsessing* over it. That's on you, isn't it?"

"It's a good way to keep from being overheard," Katsuki huffs.

"I am learning it too," Yaomomo admits a bit absently before straightening her shoulders. "The League of Villains have targeted us twice, Touya-san. If there's a chance we can cut their numbers down by one or two then that's only being proactive before they can do it a third time. It's not about helping the Villains, it's about connecting two lost brothers and making a world with less Villains in it."

Katsuki bares her teeth in amusement. "Oh, you're the clever sort." Pink crawls across the other's cheeks. "It's admirable, that you want to help," Katsuki leans forward, quieting her voice. "But I'm not interested in making you an accomplice in something that will fuck up your life. Not for someone like me and Dabi. If-" she interrupts before Yaomomo can open her mouth to protest. "There's a way you can that means you can't be accused of trying to help a Villain, that's another thing *entirely*. But you're children. *Sixteen*, but still children. It's not on you to sort out the shit we adults get ourselves stuck in, even if this Hero Society seems to think differently."

Frustration flashes momentarily across the other's face but to Katsuki's admiration she pulls herself together, hiding it with a brief averting of her eyes and a careful tilt of her head as she collects herself.

Calm – or at least a surface of it.

"Is that the only reason?" Yaomomo challenges after a breath as she turns back to her. "Or is it because you don't trust me?"

"Both," Katsuki shrugs. "I get that you're worried, and it's probably for a good fucking reason. You've put the pieces together, you don't like what you see, and that's *admirable*. I don't say that lightly, either." She rolls her neck with a *crack*. "Here's the thing- *this is way above your head*. It's above *my* fucking head, to be perfectly honest." She grimaces. "Endeavour is this world's Number One Hero – you don't challenge that lightly. And-" Katsuki glances across the room, to Fuyumi who is balancing two piece of dark chocolate cake and two glasses of champagne over to her father. "Things are fucking complicated anyway."

Yaomomo follows her gaze, lingering until she takes them both for another turn, Fuyumi disappearing among the people.

"If you want to offer your help to Shouto, that's your fucking business," Katsuki says firmly. "I don't care, frankly. I'm not your parent and I'm not interested in taking that roll. I have to draw some fucking lines as an adult or I can't respect myself but what you get up to on your own- that's on you."

The younger considers her with intelligent eyes.

"Okay," Yaomomo concedes.

"Okay?" Katsuki echoes sceptically.

-

“So where are you having your Hero Work-Studies anyway?”

“Oh! Um, you know Gang Orca-?”

Chapter End Notes

aggressively establishing that Fuyumi has a life outside her family

Hello and welcome back to In The End!

This chapter turned out a bit longer than I expected. I usually try to roll it around 10 pages but we hit 14 this time - but it felt a bit awkward to cut it off so. Here we are.

Don't think I forgot that there were students there to overhear Dabi and Shouto's conversation. Yaomomo is clever, and she's empathetic. I think someone like Jirou would be less inclined to listen to what a Villain is saying in the way that someone like Yaomomo *would*. Add that she also has some sort of established companionship with Shouto and well- here we are.

(We'll circle back to Jirou as well, but everything in its due time).

I always try to weigh rational and the Yaoyorozu's family is old and rich. That doesn't exist in a vacuum. Yaoyorozu has her struggles but her first Internship was a disaster and I have a hard time accepting that she wouldn't do *something* for the Hero-Studies thing unless she had rationalized it somehow to herself. Katsuki kinda tipped that different here all those chapters back - if someone as abrasive as her says it's not a weakness to ask a teacher for advice, then that lends credence to it, and I think Gang Orca is an interesting fit for her.

With that said, it's time for me to get working on some school stuff so I'm gonna do a quick edit and then haul this up for your enjoyment. Thank you all so much for your love and support - your comments brings me comfort when school is busy trying to drown me. Watch me be all soft and warm for you guys.

i'm on tumblr as artsy-death if you wanna catch me there and this has been chapter 71 of In The End.

I hope you enjoyed!

Remnants

Chapter Notes

Punk = Jirou

Deku = Midoriya

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Katsuki scrubs her hands across her face before dragging them down, elbows digging into her thighs and eyes focused blankly on the floor as trembles work their way through her exhausted body.

The air smells of stale sweat, she's cold, the room dark and there's a rough rasp to her voice.

The rest of the house is quiet and she pushes to her feet, stumbles and her palm slams down against her bedside table as the world flickers and dips, wood turning wet and cold beneath her bare feet and-

Katsuki claws her nails against wood, forcing her mind to latch onto the feeling of her nails snapping, pain flickering through her in a razor-sharp sort of focus as a quiet grunt works its way past her lips.

She stands there for a long moment before she glances at the clock, the numbers 02:52 staring mockingly back at her.

She presses one palm against her chest where the familiar cold rests beneath her skin, heart pounding hard and fast, remnants of fear and horror crawling through her, a faceless figure broad and tall in his suit-

Blue eyes-

A whisper.

Hand reaching out, two that refuses to reach back-

She clenches her jaw and yanks herself roughly to the large wardrobe, finding and hitting the light switch before opening the door and yanking her Hero suit out. It tumbles to the ground in a mess along with the tools she'd been using to work on it and she drops roughly down in the midst of it.

She yanks her sweaty shirt over her head and throws it aside before

grasping for the nearest boot, twisting it around and digging her nails into the rubber of the soles-

Pauses and twists, pushing up on her knees to grasp for the pink cat-eared hoodie Aizawa had loaned her in the hospital and struggles into it with a rough exhale as she finally yanks it down over the hem of her boxers.

She grasps for a knife, ignores the blood on her hands where two nails had broken clean off and slams the blade down and tearing it open.

-

The thing is-

There's a reason as to why Katsuki had considered the support department before finally picking the Hero Course.

Amélie had been twenty-two when she died and she'd been well on her way to graduating with a degree in mechanical engineering.

And having the entire sole disappear beneath her feet in winter is fucking *stupid*.

-

"It's okay to admit that you miss them, you know?"

Katsuki looks at herself in the mirror, red eyes dark, hair a sweaty mess of spikes, the undercut well on its way to grow back out to what it had been. The friendship bracelet Himiko had made for her is circling her wrist, a mix of yellow, orange and blue, the letters pressing against the inside of her wrist.

Around her middle finger the ring Dabi had picked out for her, cold against her skin, and the small alien face slides along the metal bar in her ear as she tips her head.

Himiko. Dabi. Mina.

She looks out the window, at the dark clouds above, can almost taste the rain on her tongue-

She looks at the clock, 04:32 glowing back at her and-

She paws for her phone, yanking out the charging cord and fails to unlock it with a press of her thumb.

Katsuki scrapes the dried blood off against her sheets and tries again, the screen shining bright to open up to a non-descript screen and she finds her contacts, scrolling down and then pausing, thumb hovering.

She presses down and hunches down over it, waiting, but-

“The number you’ve called-“

Katsuki tries again.

And again.

And *again*.

Her breathing is loud in her ears when she lowers it down, staring at the screen with frustration and helplessness and something thick in her throat and heart as her eyes burns as she scrolls blindly down and presses the only number that makes sense because-

Mina would be asleep, Katsuki knows.

But-

-

“If you’re in trouble I feel like I am obliged to tell you I’m waking Aizawa up because I’m too tired to deal with it.”

She tips back to sprawl against the cold wooden floor, squeezing her eyes shut as something complicated bubbles up inside of her.

“... Knock twice if you’ve been kidna-“

“Shinsou.” Her voice comes out rough and hoarse and she winces, swallowing, tongue darting out to swipe over her dry lips. “Can you...” Katsuki grasps for something but comes up empty, eyes opening to look at the dark ceiling. “Can you do me a favour and just talk?” she squeezes out.

There’s silence on the other end for a long moment and Katsuki’s fingers clenches around her phone, something sharp, ugly and dark clawing up through her throat.

“You don’t-“

“I got my Work-Studies approved yesterday,” Shinsou interrupts her and there’s a rustle, the faint sound of bare feet reaching her through the

phone as her grip slowly eases. *“Mina too, but she’s refusing to say anything about it. You’d think she was walking on clouds from the way she’s been floating about on her own personal high though. We’re both leaving for them in a few hours so we won’t be at school when you swing by.”*

“Tsukauchi?” Katsuki manages to get out.

“Yeah,” Shinsou agrees, his voice rough from lack of sleep, and-

Before waking up in this world and in this body there’d been nothing but deafening silence. It had been her normal and she’d worked on facial expressions to add clarity to the lip-reading she relied on to get through the day.

Inflections, dry sarcasm, the mirth that bubbles to spill over-

She’d read about it in books but it had been words that meant little to her and she’d preferred the expressive faces depicted in comics.

It’s one of those things she finds herself enjoying now though she still struggles with reading them.

“- apparently Midoriya managed to snag a spot last-minute from what I overheard. That means there’s eight of us who are doing Work-Studies this time. Kirishima is with Fat Gum Agency, Uraraka and Asui are both with the Ryukyu Agency. Tokoyami has been fairly quiet about his so far so it wouldn’t surprise me if he’s working with one of the top-five Heroes-“

Shinsou has a pleasant voice, Katsuki finds herself thinking as she stares out the window.

It’s not deep but there’s a roughness to it that seemed to deepen at the late hours, trailing off into a quiet background noise as the first rain starts falling outside.

-

Katsuki is still wearing her cat hoodie hours later, the hood pulled up and over her head, jacket shrugged over it and thumb rubbing over the folded blade deep in her pocket as she stares out at the drying streets, sun just starting to peek through the dark clouds.

She has her backpack with her, two umbrellas shoved into it, just in case, and there’s a restless sort of energy in the bounce of her leg as Fuyumi turns the wheel of the car to roll up the road to U.A..

-

“- my quirk can’t make your nails regrow but at least I can speed up the healing.”

Katsuki hunches deeper into her jacket, having refused a physical, and Recovery Girl studies her for a moment longer before leaning back with a sigh.

“I’ve read your files, girl. I know your quirk interferes with most medications so there really isn’t much I can do for you other than heal up whatever physical wounds there are.” Her eyes are contemplative. “What would you usually do during one of these episodes?”

Katsuki stares at her because the words *curl up at home with kaa-san or tou-san* isn’t an answer that is going to change anything.

She sinks deeper into her jacket. “It’s not raining anymore.”

“That is true.” Recovery Girl glances down at her tab. “And there’s a low chance of any new rain today which is the only reason I’m going to let you leave this room.”

“I’m just here to pick up Shouto,” Katsuki grumbles. “Yumi is getting Natsuo.”

“Have you eaten anything today?” The sudden turn of subject makes her blink but the other doesn’t bother waiting for an answer. “When you head to the dorm make sure to grab a fruit or something with sugar. A bar of chocolate would be ideal if you can find any which really shouldn’t be too hard in a dorm of nineteen teenagers.”

Katsuki had spent breakfast slowly working her way through a plate of food that had tasted like absolutely nothing. The egg slimy, the rice thick and grainy-

The only thing that hadn’t made her want to gag had been the miso and Fuyumi had ended up switching out the fish for some plain toast.

The idea of more food is *not* appealing.

“Touya-san?”

She blinks, raising her head to find the other’s eyes and-

“Ah, yeah,” she gets out. “Food. Yay.”

Recovery Girl's mouth thins.

-

The door opens wide, only narrowly avoiding slamming into the wall by a white-knuckled grip on the handle that yanks it back at the last moment.

"Is everything okay?" Rumpled hair, dark training shorts and a thin hoodie half-zipped over a light blue t-shirt. "I came as soon as I- Do you need blood? My blood type is O so I'm an universal donor and-"

Katsuki stares at green hair, green eyes, a fretful sort of expression that makes her skin itch as Deku takes a reflexive step towards her before halting and looking towards Recovery Girl who'd raised a hand to halt him.

"Touya-san is here to pick up Todoroki-san," the elderly Hero explains patiently as Katsuki hunches into the collar of her jacket, hoodie drooping down on her forehead. "But she also needs to eat something. If you could do be a favour and make sure she gets to the dorms in one piece and actually eats something-" Here she gives Katsuki an entirely undeserved look, "that would be wonderful. Preferably something with a high dose of sugar."

"Of course!" Deku straightens up. "Sato-san always has bars in his room and I think he made a chocolate cake for dinner yesterday? I didn't eat any but I heard about it and-"

"That would be perfect." Recovery Girl leans back with a satisfied smile. "I'd offer my gummi bears but they're sugar free vitamins."

"What's wrong with her?" Deku steps back to close the door, eyes scanning over her as he approached properly and-

"She's just a bit on the edge today," Recovery Girl explains smoothly. "No touching or loud noise if it can be avoided. You teenagers can be rowdy and that's the last thing she needs right now."

"I'm *right here*," Katsuki hisses. "It's just the rain fucking with me."

Deku's brows furrows. "The rain?" he repeats, glancing to the blinds that had been pulled shut. "But it's not-"

"But it *was* and I can- *still smell it.*"

The words never makes it past her lips as she clenches her jaw and averts her gaze, uncomfortable in her skin, shoulders tense.

There's a moment of silence before-

"I don't like *cheese*." The words are blurted out with an awkward spreads of his hands in front of him. "I mean, there's nothing wrong with cheese-" Deku backtracks. "But- you know Aoyama-kun? He, uh, he misunderstood some things and he wanted to make friends and he'd sneak out in the middle of the night outside my room to leave plates of cheese spelling out weird stuff and I just... I never knew cheese could make me paranoid but-" He offers her an awkward smile. "I don't know why rain is bad for you but- I never thought cheese would give me a heart attack in the middle of the night either." He rubs at the back of his neck. "So, I mean. It's- It's nothing to be ashamed of, Touya-senpai!"

Katsuki stares blankly at him because-

What.

-

"I was about to call you yesterday," Deku says as Katsuki is half-seriously entertaining the thought of just moving to a fucking desert. "But Todoroki-kun mentioned that you we're going to a fundraiser with Endeavour so I didn't want to bother you."

"Good for you," Katsuki mutters, sinking deeper into the warm soft hood as it droops down further to shadow her face. "I'mma take a gamble and guess it's about your Work-Studies." Her brow furrows. "Or about telling Aizawa, I guess. If you've gotten around to it."

"I haven't."

Katsuki slants him a look and Deku raises both hands, fingers spreading out. "I meant to!" he tells her, voice rising as he waves them. "But- you know that look Aizawa-sensei gives? The one that's just-"

Deku makes a terribly accurate imitation of a half-dead flat stare that makes the ghostly whisper of *problem child* rise at the back of her head to a startled twitch of her fingers.

"It's like he *knows*," Deku says in a hush, peering around before looking back at her. "He's not going to be happy once I tell him and-

there's just been a lot going on, lately? And I've been trying to talk to talk with Todoroki-kun who's been avoiding me?" There's a naked sort of worry in Deku's eyes for a brief moment before it's replaced by something else entirely. "I *did* talk with All Might though and I have official permission to call him Yagi-san." Deku's cheeks flushes at the admittance. "I think he was pretty surprised? But- he looked kinda happy about it, too."

"You look pretty happy about it," Katsuki observes dryly.

Deku rubs at the back of his neck before the motion stills and he shakes his head. "I thought a lot about what you said," he tells her. "And- I think I've only heard one other person call him by name and it's just... it made me wonder if he's lonely? I mean, I've never had a lot of friends. There was Kacchan and then-" He bites down on his lower lip. "You probably know it already but they all used to call me Deku? Kacchan and- The only people who called me Midoriya was my teachers and even *they* forgot at times. There's Mom, of course, but- it got lonely. Like- I wasn't really Midoriya Izuku but this useless-" He gestures vaguely. "But now it's my Hero name." His mouth tips up into a strange sort of half-smile. "Kacchan... he would have been *so mad* if he knew."

Katsuki stares at him for a moment longer before snorting and focusing ahead to the dark broad empty corridor with the wide-windows.

It's... strange to hear about the boy, Katsuki thinks as she scratches at the inside of her wrist, pausing and pressing down against the friendship bracelet there, finding the K for Katsuki without looking.

He feels... less like her than the woman. He'd been too young for the mental age she feels but-

She's aware that he isn't without influence on who she is today.

And she feels guilt when it comes to him because she exists at the cost of him. Less, than she had, more in some ways, because the absence of Mitsuki and Masaru it-

Katsuki forces the hostile thought away as something ugly bubbles up in her chest, not in the mood to deal with it.

Calm, she reminds herself, grasping for *something* and finally settles for mentally picture the dry dunes of a desert. Shoves a towel beneath her mental little palm tree at a tiny oases and a pile of her favourite

comics and a cold drink with a slice of lemon and-

“Do you know-“ There’s a note of hesitance in his voice. “Todoroki-kun, he nearly used his flames on you during the Provisional exam.”

“As he used them on you during the Sports Festival,” Katsuki slants him a look. “What about it?”

“Nothing!” Deku raises his hands. “It’s- none of my business, really, but- he’s my friend. Are you... um.”

He stares at her.

Katsuki stares back.

“I’m... not going to murder him or anything?” she offers blankly.

“That... is not nearly as reassuring as you think it is, Touya-senpai.”

-

“What’s with her?”

“Oh! Um – bad day?” Deku offers somewhere to her right.

Katsuki, who has given up on being a normal human being for the moment, had found herself a good spot at the large table and promptly buried her face against her arms, hood pulled low to make sure no light reached her.

Deku had turned on some sort of pop music for reasons that absolutely escapes her but at least it makes her think less of rain as she half-trails her attention along the lyrics, the other half of her mind focused on him rummage around in the kitchen.

He’d disappeared up the stairs, and then returned down, and she can only hazard that there’s a cake being prepared for her which makes her stomach knot and just-

“Ah! The sign – I put a sign-“

“Oh, come on-“

“It’s there for a reason, Jirou-san!” There’s a note of reproach in Deku’s voice and Katsuki turns her head a bit blearily, just enough to find him with his back to her, arms folded, and-

There's a note on the table, folded up like one of those middle-school name signs, and she gives it a poke with her index finger to find-

DON'T TOUCH.

(Please be quiet).

She stares at it before snorting and slumping back, quite content to ignore the word as Deku and Punk's argument devolved into something else entirely and she squeezes her eyes shut, feeling a headache creeping on her but-

She doesn't feel as off-center, and she knows the headache isn't a bad sign, but rather her mind scrambling in the aftermath of something bad, and-

There's something about Deku that makes her feel less like the dead woman and-

Her eyes opens wide and she jerks into a sitting position, heart pounding in her chest, and in-front of her Deku freezes with a plate loaded tall with a chocolate cake that-

And.

She stares at him, something like horror crawling up through her.

-

"Touya-senpai-"

"Leave me alone." Katsuki groans, voice muffled as she buries deeper into her arms. "I'm having an existential crisis."

"But the chocolate-"

"Just put it in a fucking container, I'll eat it in the car."

-

Katsuki paws at her pockets until she finds a half-squished package of cigarettes and pulls one out with a twist of her fingers before snagging it between her lips. It's the black ones with the familiar little blue ace of spades that Dabi no-doubt paid extra for.

A hand appears in her vision as she's stuffing the package back down, a small yellow and red flame blossoming from a single finger.

She leans forward, hearing the soft crackling and tasting the ash and mint as she breathes in, letting the smoke curl down to fill her lungs as she leant back, eyes closing down to relish in it the false sense of calm that crawls through her veins, stilling the trembling of her fingers.

“We need to talk,” Shouto says quietly from beside her, his eyes steadily focused forward as she slants him a look.

“No shit,” Katsuki says, breathing out a long stream of white smoke, refusing to look back at the school behind her.

Chapter End Notes

Because if you're tipping too much in one direction, what happens when you tip in the other?

We're almost at the next arc - we have Saturday and then we have a phone call being expected on Sunday. Oh I'm just ready to deep dive into this arc but there was a lot to figure out and establish before it and I've long-since decided that this story will just have to pace itself because we're nearing 300k words anyway. But I gotta tell you guys - this next arc? Yeaaaah. It gonna be interesting for sure. I'm just terribly excited to get to Overhaul.

Been spending my days writing, school work and playing Among Us which is just an absolutely delightful game when you find a decent group to play with. It's a bit of a hit or miss as a girl but, ya know, it goes. It also has so many fanfics which was amazing to discover so I've worked my way through a good chunk of those. Let me have my little space family and their new alien friend, pls.

I also had my back fixed today! Expensive (in the world of a student) but worth it. I feel like a new human! Thank you everyone who offered some advice for me - I'm trying my best to figure out how to avoid this again. Been a horrible few months of back pain. Urgh.

Uh. Anyway! This chapter needed to happen so here we are and I'm about to get working on the next one because damn, this talk has been a long-time coming.

I'm artsy-death on tumblr if you want to talk with me there and this has been chapter 72 of In The End.

I hope you enjoyed!

Forest Fires

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

”What are you doing?”

Katsuki shoves the metal in place, grasping blindly until she finds the ratchet among the tools, twisting it around to secure the whole thing in place with more force than necessary.

Shouto had found a seat on the stairs near her, his bag by his feet, and he looks comfortable in a baby blue soft shirt beneath his jacket, unbothered by the cold that sends a shiver down her back and makes her hunch deeper into her hoodie.

”We’re going to have a talk,” Katsuki bites out, rubbing at her nose. “But I need a fucking break so we’re going for a ride.”

”I’ve never ridden a bicycle before,” he muses thoughtfully. “Am I supposed to sit on the back of it? I think I’ve seen that before in movies. It looked very romantic.”

Katsuki pauses, glancing dubiously at him, and he stares innocently back at her.

”Your sense of humour is atrocious,” she tells him flatly, palms pressing down against her knees as she straightened out. “You want something to eat?”

”A picnic?” He tilts his head. “Haven’t had one of those either.”

”Your list of *normal shit I haven’t done* is mildly concerning,” Katsuki informs him dryly. “I’ll grab something. You just- *stay there*.”

-

Katsuki finds Fuyumi in the kitchen and the other woman glances over at her with a smile.

”I’m stealing Shouto for a bit.” Katsuki yanks the fridge open, scanning over the things inside.

She grabs the butter, salad and tomato, ham, cheese, a spread she

distantly remembers having been pretty great, and stares at the two different kinds of yams she finds. “Shouto a blueberry yam or strawberry yam sort of person?”

“Strawberry,” Fuyumi answers as she stretches up to pull a bowl from one of the cupboards. “You having a picnic?”

“Something like that.” She grabs the yam, shouldering the fridge shut and dumping it all out on the counter. “Endeavour won’t be back until five, right?” she checks as she yanks the bag or sliced bread close and pours out half of them.

“Five at the earliest, he had some urgent business at the office and he phoned to tell me he might be late. There’s been some concerning rumours going around.” Fuyumi places the bowl and spices aside. “You want some help with that?”

“If you don’t mind.” Katsuki pauses. “He’ll eat sandwiches, right?”

“I don’t think there’s a lot he won’t eat,” Fuyumi says warmly. “Sandwiches will be just fine.”

“Right.”

“I bought some soda earlier this week.” Fuyumi deftly separates the slices of bread. “They’re in these cute little glass bottles, and I do believe there’s some mochis at the back of the fridge-“

-

Katsuki closes the door shut behind her, leaning back as she cranes her head to look at the sky, bag dangling from her fingertips.

“Your sister is a menace,” she gets out as Shouto peers at her in askance.

The air tastes of the rain that had been – that particular earthy scent that persists after a heavy rainfall filling up her nose as she inhales, lungs expanding before she breathes out.

She hates that she can’t enjoy the rain anymore. She remembers-

She remembers *loving it*. The scent, the feeling of her hair soaking wet, the way it had dripped from her cold nose as she spread her arms, bare feet hitting muddy piles of water, delighting in the way it splashed up her ankles.

It's bad morality to use a child as a distraction, her mind pipes up but Katsuki...

She doesn't want to think about Deku and the anger that gnaws under her skin, a familiar companion that makes her want to dig her nails into her wrists and tear them open until she's *bleeding*-

To watch the echoes of her soul spill out until she's not the fucked-up thing she is today.

It doesn't work like that, Katsuki knows, but the urge still persists like an obnoxious sort of buzzing.

She forces herself to push away and Shouto straightens up, his gaze keen on her as she throws the backpack over the handles, pulling the straps tight to secure it and the knotting them with a rough tug to make sure they wouldn't tangle in the wheel and send them careening into an absolutely idiotic death.

"Alright so-" Katsuki beckons him over and he steps up in front of her, blinking as she roughly shoved a helmet down over that stupid half-n-half hair of his. "The metal poles are there for your feet. You're going to wrap your arms around me because it's going to get fucking bumpy, alright? I'd rather you didn't split your head open on a rock. Or tree. Or root or - anything of the sorts."

She can just see the potential headlines.

Endeavour's new sidekick kills his youngest son in the middle of a forest.

Yeah. She's staying far away from that.

He gives her a serious nod. "I'll hold tight," he promises her and she stares at him because-

I'm such a fucking asshole, she thinks with something that is close to exasperation but tangled in something darker and heavier where it crawls inside her chest.

Katsuki is not in a good mental state to have a fucking *talk*, and she knows it, but *what the hell is she supposed to do?*

She shoves her own helmet on before she straddles the bike, grasping the handles in a tight white-knuckled grip as Shouto puts one hand on her hip, settling in place behind her. She draws a rough breath as he

loops one arm around her, forcing herself to breathe out as she reaches back blindly.

“Both,” she tells him, staring out in front of her as she felt the warmth of him settle properly against her back, trusting her, which is-

I'm not okay, Katsuki acknowledges as she presses down on the paddle, jerking them both forward, his arms tightening in surprise as she forces her muscles to work, the cold air filling her lungs as she takes a hard left turn away from the Todoroki household.

-

I am my own person.

Her eyes burns, heart pounding inside her chest, something very close to desperation burning through her as she tips them hard down a slope, her sneaker pressing down against the trunk of a tree, muscles bunching tight as she jerked the wheel, narrowly avoiding an ill-placed rock as they skidded down, mud splattering.

But you aren't, her mind mocks her. *Deku just proved again how much you aren't.*

She clenches her jaw tight, Shouto's fingers digging into her hips as she pressed up, jerking the bike over a large root, the world a splatter of colour around them both and yet-

Katsuki tips them down another slope, turning the wheel to slide side-ways down it before they hit the proper trail path again and she swerves down it, dropping back down, and his arms circles her properly again as she draws a sharp breath through her mouth, forcing it out through her nose-

So what if Deku made me feel less disconnected, Katsuki thinks forcefully as she presses down on the breaks to take a sharp turn. *That doesn't mean anything. I wasn't even dissociating – I was just in a bad fucking state. Tipping too much towards the memories of that shitty night and he made me think of-*

A hand reaching out, green eyes wide as he-

As she.

“J'ai des problèmes mentaux,” Katsuki mutters to herself, swerving sharply to avoid a thick branch, turning them in a near perfect 90

degree turn, his fingers sinking into her midriff at the sharp jerk, back wheel momentarily leaving the ground before hitting the ground hard as she forced them into movement.

-

Katsuki halts them at a small cliff, muddy sneaker hitting the ground to steady the bike, knuckles red and cold but body warm, sweat making her hoodie stick damp against her back and she exhales roughly.

Shouto cautiously unlatches his grip on her, pressing up on the metal bars, one hand steadying against her shoulder as he peered past her, down at the lake trapped in a near perfect circle of thick trees.

“We’re having our picnic here then?”

“If you’re unhappy with it we can always look for another spot.”

“Don’t take this the wrong way.” She turns her head to find him pale-faced and ruffled. “But I’d rather fight Midoriya again.”

-

“Is that chocolate cake?”

Katsuki grunts through a mouthful.

Shouto, on his knees beside her, soda fizzing in the silence, takes a slow bite of his sandwich as she aggressively chews it down, and he quite deliberately turns to look out at the lake as she made short work of it with a grimace as she swallowed it down, wiping at her mouth to rid of the crumbs.

She flicks her tongue over her teeth as she reaches for her soda and takes a generous mouthful only to end up nearly choking because-

Yeah, her tastebuds are still fucked, and her nose prickles from the bubbles as she places it down, feeling rather betrayed, all things considered.

“Deku-” She scrubs her hand over her nose. “Made me *promise* to eat it so you’re my damn eyewitness.”

“He made you promise to eat a piece of chocolate cake?” Shouto asks with bemusement.

Katsuki flops down flat on her back, staring up at the sky, quite done with life.

“... Just fucking tell him I ate the damn thing if he asks.”

Shouto pauses his eating, slowly placing his sandwich aside, and then copies her.

She can hear the rise and fall of his chest as he breathes, the rustle of the wind as it sweeps through the forest, leaves fluttering, trees swaying, the distant sound of a bird crowing-

She grasps for every ounce of calm she has in her body, forcing the aggressive gnawing in her chest down, telling herself to *suck it up and be a fucking adult for ten minutes*.

“I know you want to apologize and shit,” Katsuki forces out. “But consider yourself fucking forgiven or whatever.”

“Is that what you brought me all the way out here to say?” Shouto asks her, folding his hands on top of his stomach. “Because I saw my life flashing by at least two times on the ride here so, taking that into consideration, it’s really *you* who owe me an apology at this point.”

“I didn’t drive us off a cliff. You’re *welcome*.”

“You’re in a mood today,” Shouto observes, turning his head to look at her. “Did something happen?”

Katsuki swallows down the snarky response that crawls its way up her throat and instead breathes out with a hiss through her teeth, snapping them in irritation.

“We’re not here to talk about *me*, we’re here to talk about *you*.” She turns her head to meet his gaze. “Want to tell me why your classmates are so worried about you it’s making its way back to me?”

Katsuki is...

Well, she’d been expecting some kind of defensiveness but Shouto turns his head to look up as she stares at him, brow creasing.

“Is it about Dabi?” she asks finally, fingers curling into the soft hem of her hoodie. “I mean, it must have been surprising. To realize he’s alive.” The words comes out short and awkward, her mouth flattening, and she realises she’s uncomfortable because-

Shouto had been there for her when All Might beat her black and blue – inviting her over and offering understanding and she’s...

I’m so fucking useless at this, she thinks as she stares at the pale sharp line of his jaw, the arch of his nose, and the scar that stands out starkly against his skin.

“Did you have any siblings?” Shouto asks. “Not in this world but – the other one.”

The sudden turn of conversation makes her stare at him but- maybe it’s just okay to let him take the lead here because her chest is heavy and the air taste of rain.

“No,” she admits. “There was just me and Mom and Dad.” She sinks her teeth into the inside of her cheek but – *fuck it*. “My dad, he had relatives, but I only met them once or twice. They didn’t approve of his marriage to my mom and by extension me.”

“Why is that?”

“Racism,” Katsuki says dryly and he gives her a startled look. “My mom wasn’t white, they didn’t much approve of where she came from, or her religion, and they weren’t very impressed by him ‘taking in another man’s child’.” She wrinkles her nose. “There was probably a healthy dose of ableism involved in the whole thing too.”

There’s an old memory of children older than her pushing and shoving, mouths moving too fast for her to understand anything as she tried to scramble back inside after being sent out to *play*.

She hadn’t much enjoyed the experience and she’d been dirty and bruised in the aftermath of it, clutching at her dad’s pants as one of her older cousin’s glowered at her with a dark bruise around his eye where she’d managed to get a good hit with her elbow.

Her dad had bought her an ice cream afterwards and they’d never spoken about it again but there had been no more visits either.

“Because you were deaf?”

“Mm.” Katsuki raises a hand to scratch at her cheek, resisting the urge to sink her nails deep into her skin. “I was born deaf and I relied on sign-language to get me through the day and that meant a lot of people just wrote me off as mute, deaf and dumb.” A pause. “And rude. There’s only so many times you can tell someone they’re stupid

to their face before you just end up giving them the finger,” she says wryly.

“I’m sorry.”

She raises her hand in a lazy wave. “It’s not some tragedy – I liked my life just fine and quite frankly, I miss the silence. Being deaf wasn’t the issue, it was the world that frustrated me.” She draws a breath, holds it, and then slowly exhales. “But yeah – just me and Dad and Mom, no siblings, just some cousins on my dad’s side who weren’t worth much.”

“What about your biological dad?” Shouto wonders. “If you don’t mind me asking,” he tacks on belatedly.

“s fine,” Katsuki huffs. “He died when he and Mom fled the war in their home country – shot at one of the control stations along the road. Mom didn’t find out until days later.” Katsuki only knows because her dad had sat her down when she was fourteen to tell her what little he knew. He’d been frank with her and she’d appreciated it. “I was named after him though,” Katsuki muses. “Dad insisted I have something to remember him by, Mom wanted something French, and Amélie was a compromise.”

“War?”

“World’s a shitty place. We didn’t have Heroes and Villains to entertain us so instead there were plenty of wars and other crap.”

“Thank you for telling me.”

Katsuki rolls over to her side, planting her elbow down and squishing her cheek up against the palm of her hand. “Considering all the shit I’m learning about your family, I don’t mind evening out the field a little. But I didn’t bring you out in the middle of nowhere for nothing so – *talk*. *Something* is clearly up or your classmates wouldn’t be desperate enough to ask me to play therapist to you.” Her voice is dry as a desert. “Whatever the fuck is on your mind, you have my permission to just blurt it the hell out and I’ll do minimal judging.”

“*Minimal* judging?”

“I’m an asshole, it comes with the territory,” she says flatly. “And there’s this weird thing about your family that just makes my skin *itch* with anger.”

“Except Touya.”

“*Especially* Dabi,” Katsuki snorts even as something softens inside of her. “He’s an asshole *extraordinaire*. He could probably make a career out of it.” A pause. “Kinda is, I guess.”

Shouto is quiet for a long moment – long enough that Katsuki’s half-distractedly staring at a small black beetle making its steady way to a small splatter of yam, mandibles large and jagged for its tiny size, when he finally opens his mouth.

“Have you ever wondered why the upper floor is out of bounds?” he asks her, mismatched eyes finding hers briefly before he focused up above again. “That’s where my room used to be. I was rarely allowed downstairs, except when Mom would take me out for an errand when *he* wasn’t home. The only one of my siblings I used to actually see was Touya.”

And on today’s list of: what fucked-up thing will I discover about the Todoroki household today-

“Natsuo has an ice quirk, Fuyumi has more ice than fire, but Touya – before I was born, he was Endeavour’s pride and joy.” There’s a strange heaviness to his voice and Katsuki can kinda guess where this is going. “He used to train him but when my quirk was discovered, it became less and less until it was just an hour here and there when he was already training me.”

“... There are so many things wrong about what you just said.” Katsuki flops over on her stomach, chin digging uncomfortably into the blanket. “So, what – you were close? And you miss him?”

Shouto shakes his head. “I don’t think Touya liked me very much,” he admits. “I think... that towards the end, before he disappeared, he might even have hated me.”

Katsuki stares at him.

“But you didn’t hate him?” she ventures, trying to piece together the situation presented.

“Do you think that’s strange?”

“Not particularly,” she mutters, wrinkling her nose as he looked at her in askance. “You hate Endeavour, right? And you and Dabi – you both experienced the worst side of him. ‘s not to strange to think that you

feel close to him because of that. Especially if you didn't see much of Natsuo and Fuyumi until you got older."

She's silent for a moment, making sure she had the issue correctly pinned down before-

"Look, I don't have siblings, I'm not going to pretend I understand the situation fully." Because she doesn't – the idea of siblings are entirely alien to her. "But just so we're clear – it's not your fucking fault Endeavour decided to obsess over you, yeah?"

"It feels like it is," Shouto admits quietly. "Touya was struggling with controlling his quirk and if it wasn't for me – then maybe Endeavour would have been helping him instead of ignoring him."

"Probably," Katsuki agrees bluntly. "But life isn't a *what-if* and you're not responsible for the actions of others. *Especially* someone who was supposed to love and support *all of you*. That's on him being a shitty father."

"Fuyumi says I should..." Discomfort and something else crosses his face. "She says that I should try and forgive him."

"Your siblings frankly have no fucking business telling you to do anything," Katsuki says flatly. "Tell them to fuck off."

"I can't-"

"You *can*." Katsuki draws her lips back to flash teeth. "Family is supposed to be more than blood so if you want to fuck off and, I don't know, marry *Deku* and have a family with him instead– that's something you *can do*."

"*Marry*-"

"Or get adopted by his mom and All Might, I don't fucking care *how* you decide to swing it, but blood means *shit* if you're stuck with people who treat you like you're just there to fit into a roll of their perfect dream scenario." She glowers at him. "Fuyumi has no business telling you what to do, and neither do Natsuo for that matter, or *anyone else*. What you decide to do, that's entirely up to you and no-one else. It's *your* life. *You're* the one who have to live with the consequences, not *them*."

There's something clearly startled in the mismatched eyes that finds hers where she lies, on her stomach, chin uncomfortably propped up

and making a very good impression of a starfish.

"I thought you liked Fuyumi," he voices hesitantly.

"What does that have to do with anything?" Katsuki demands. "I can like her *and* say that she's being a shitty sister to you."

"She's not—"

"She is if she's trying to push you to forgive someone who fucking *abused* you. There's no excuses for that, I don't care how much she wants to be 'a family' again. Because if there was a time that household wasn't a toxic mess, you weren't a part of it, were you?" She shoves her elbows down to prop herself up. "You're your own fucking person, right? Tell them to fuck off and give yourself time to deal with shit, if that's what you need, and you *clearly* do."

"But Touya—"

"*Dabi* is being an idiot right now, he's not going to want to—" Katsuki works her jaw. "Look, I get that he's your brother but he's *so angry* at Endeavour right now. And for a good fucking reason. And he's in the League of Villains, he's attacked the class, he's not — he's an *asshole*. I don't want him to be a Villain but right now he's not interested in listening to a shit you or I have to say. So — fuck him for the moment and focus on yourself for once."

"... You have a very aggressive way of caring."

Katsuki twitches. "Oh fuck off, I'm being serious."

"I know." Shouto rolls over to his side, knees drawing up ever so slightly, his head pillowed on his arm. "I *am* sorry I nearly killed you. I let my anger get the better of me, it shouldn't have happened. I am supposed to be better than that."

Katsuki hears the unspoken *better than him* in those words and—honestly, she *was* mad, but she'd have to be real fucking shitty to hold it against him.

"You've been dealing with a shit hand and you had that loudmouth being a fucking asshole, speaking about shit he knows nothing about." The memory makes her lips curl back. "He had no fucking business harassing you because he had some issue with Endeavour. That is — it's so fucking *low*."

"I'll do better next time," he tells her earnestly. "I won't let it happen again."

"My health appreciates it but for fuck's sake, it's *okay* to be angry." Exasperation creeps into her voice. "Take it from someone who knows – shoving it down just makes it explode at the worst fucking time. So go yell in the woods or, I don't know, at *Aizawa*. He's your teacher for a reason."

"For me to... yell at?" Shouto repeats sceptically.

"For you to not-" Katsuki searches for the right words. "To help you handle shit," she settles on.

"Speaking of family." A contemplative note dips into his voice. "If you marry Touya, then you'd be my sister-in-law."

"... Wherever you're going with this conversation I'm not-"

"Then that means we'd technically be family."

Katsuki gives him a flat look.

"We're not getting *married*."

"Not even in the future?"

"Do I look like I dream of a white-picket fence future?" she asks dryly. "Does *Dabi*?"

The idea is frankly ludicrous. Maybe there had been a time where Amélie had dreamt about a marriage but – it just seems overcomplicated and fanciful and she's...

She's not Amélie.

Her hand curls, feeling the metal of the ring Dabi had given her, cold against her skin.

"That's too bad." He shuffles just a bit closer and she eyes him warily. "I wouldn't mind having you as my sister," he tells her.

"... You need a healthier idea of family like fucking yesterday."

-

Katsuki stares up at the grey sky, sprawled out on her back, arms

spread out over her head.

Shouto is leaning his head back on her stomach, hands folded on his chest, *talking*, and she flexes her fingers, reminding herself to remain *calm*, to not be angry, because anger means glowy shit and she's not-

She's not supposed to be angry and what is done is *done*. She can't change shit about the past, and neither can he.

Katsuki raises her head, neck straining, staring at the red hair that is closest to her, the scar on his face that is echoed in something worse on his father's face where her nitroglycerin had smeared down, Dabi's blue flames chasing it.

Anger at the man who had failed him driving him, pushing him further and further away, threatening to consume him entirely.

“- once, he came into my room after training. It had been a particularly bad one and my leg was all bruised up but he helped me put cream on it before wrapping it up. He never said a word but-“

There's something rotten in your family, Dabi.

She drops her head back down, staring at a leaf as it falls from a tree, caught by the wind, fluttering into a spin towards the still pool of water.

But your little brother is just as much a victim of it as you are.

Chapter End Notes

J'ai des problèmes mentaux = I have mental issues

Envy and jealousy and complicated family relations.

The mind is a complicated thing and Katsuki isn't a solution to Shouto's troubles, at most she can lend an ear and give him her perspective on it but he's dealing with a lot of stuff. His father's position as the number one hero, being the only one in his class who didn't pass, his brother's return from death, a sister who wants him to forgive his father and Natsuo - he has his own issues as well. I think that for Shouto - he's in a complicated position where he's going to have to make a choice going forward and it's far from easy.

He'll hit his breaking point, everyone does, but at this point it

hasn't quite sunk in for him what Dabi being alive for him *means*. Katsuki is more cynical and realistic in this and knows that Dabi isn't a good person, that he's selfish, that he's *human*, and that his need for vengeance is making something dangerous out of the man she knows.

It's a very idealistic idea to think that just talking will solve a lifetime of hurt and anger and Katsuki is intimately aware how dangerous anger can be. She's also very firm on the idea that children aren't supposed to solve the issues of adults, even if the rest of the world isn't in-line with her thinking, and she's *trying* because she's very aware of the fact that Shouto's family is doing him a disservice.

Even Fuyumi, in her well-meaning attempts, are being selfish in wanting that forgiveness because Shouto doesn't owe it to forgive Endeavour just because they're family. But he doesn't have a healthy perspective on what family is supposed to be, none of the Todoroki children really do.

A disastrous mess it be.

Thank you all for being absolutely wonderful - we're so close to the next arc and I can't wait to sink my claws into it. I hope you're all having an absolutely fantastic day, love you guys.

(Also my pet marimo, Bast, says hello).

I'm artsy-death on tumblr if you wanna catch me there and this has been chapter 73 of In The End.

I hope you enjoyed!

Unanswered Calls

Chapter Notes

《Hello》 = sign-language

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Katsuki lowers her book, just enough to look at Shouto who was making himself comfortable at the end of her bed, nudging at her leg until she slowly moved it aside, and folding his legs up and dropping a pile of books down beside her.

“... What are you doing in my room?”

“Homework.” He offers one book up for her view as evidence.

“... And you couldn’t do that in your room?”

It’s nearing eight pm. Dinner had been a strange affair, most of the conversation flowing easily between Natsuo and Fuyumi, Shouto quiet in his corner, and Katsuki-

Katsuki hadn’t been in a mood to stick along for long and had ditched them after forcing down enough food to make her feel queasy.

He offers a shrug.

Truly, it isn’t her business. Katsuki is already far more involved than she had any business *being* but- the mess of this family is being shoved in her face every damn fucking day and Katsuki, unfortunately, has both eyes and ears.

She can’t ignore some shit. It doesn’t mean she necessarily *cares*. Not like she cares about Dabi, or Mina or Himiko. But Shouto...

Katsuki blows air through her nose, slams her book shut and drops it down to the floor as she hauls herself up into a sitting position.

Mismatched eyes flicks up to catch her gaze as she presses her palms down and leans forward into his face.

“Want to watch a movie?”

“Okay, new fucking question: what movies *have* you watched?” Katsuki asks in exasperation, Shouto beside her, just a tad too close as he scanned over the different covers and titles on the screen as she tapped the arrow down.

“Midoriya showed me the All Might one?”

“... Which one of them?” She pauses and taps open to open a new tab, typing in *All Might movies* and opening them up for him to look over.

After a brief moment he points out one of the most recent ones and Katsuki squints at it.

“Well, that’s a fucking disaster.” She wrinkles her nose. “There are more movies than Hero ones. In fact-“

Katsuki goes back to the movie page and opens up the classical page, scanning over them until she found one that she figured might be just enough on the nose for him to enjoy and opens it up.

Shouto slides off the bed and pads over to turn off the light as she settled her laptop on a pile of pillows before slouching back on her hands.

He settles back beside her, eyes shining from the light of the screen as it opened up to a hospital with newborn babies crowding on the screen.

“Everyone is born, but not everyone is born the same. Some will grow to become butchers, bakers or candlestick makers. Someone will be really good at making jello salad. One way or the other though, every human being is unique, for better or for worse.”

“Most parents believe their children are the most beautiful creatures to ever grace the planet. Others take a less... emotional approach.”

-

Katsuki, half-asleep with her cheek mashed against Shouto’s shoulder, jerks with a start as his finger pokes at her cheek, and smacks it aside at it with a yawn that makes her eyes water.

“Liked it?” she asks as she notices the after text rolling on the black screen.

“It was... interesting,” Shouto says, eyes intent on her. “Are there

more movies like it?" he asks after a long moment where Katsuki was starting to wonder if she'd perhaps been a bit too blunt with it.

"course." She paws a hand over her eyes. "Anything in particular you liked about it?"

"She... found happiness. I liked that part."

Katsuki wouldn't claim to be a movie fan, she'd always preferred comics and then books if she had to take a pick, but Mitsuki and Masaru both liked to relax with a movie during the weekends.

More child friendly movies when she was younger until it became a bit of a mishmash of anything and everything that had caught their attention. Still a lot of just family friendly shit.

There had been... some intention with those, she knows, but she hadn't hated them.

"I'll text you a list." She flops back on her bed. "I'mma guess you don't have an account so you can borrow mine. I'll send you the details."

It's the one Mitsuki and Masaru had gotten her but they hadn't cancelled it and Katsuki... is too tired to think about why that is.

Shouto looks down at her, and then turns deliberately before lowering himself down to put his head on her stomach.

He shuffles his shoulders to make sure he was comfortable, fingers folding together on his stomach.

"Endeavour never returned for dinner."

"Yeah," Katsuki agrees with a grunt.

"It was a good visit."

"Mm."

-

Sunday comes and goes.

She watches Shouto leave with Fuyumi.

Endeavour finally decides to make an appearance at lunch, looking unruffled and unbothered and most certainly not like he got caught-up

doing some Hero bullshit which is... suspicious as fuck, Katsuki ain't gonna lie about that.

She's dicing vegetables as he trades his shoes for slippers after hanging up his jacket, dressed in a button-up shirt, sleeves rolled-up and hem tucked into his slacks as he approaches her.

"There is another apron."

She stares at him.

"Bottom drawer," she answers after a moment of trying to decide if she'd hallucinated it or not. "Fuyumi wanted something with fish," she adds, watching as he bent down to pull it out and loop it over his neck. "So I'm making couscous salad with veggies and feta cheese to go with it."

He grabs the fish she'd prepared and Katsuki stares as he turns the heat on and-

I am not paid enough to deal with this family, Katsuki decides as she focuses back on her tomatoes.

-

Bizarrely, Endeavour doesn't mention having helped her as Fuyumi returns home to find the table set, *not* courtesy of her because Katsuki had been doing fuck-all, sticking warily to her corner as Endeavour did... all that.

This is the kind of nice that happens before someone kills you and buries your body in the woods, Katsuki thinks as she eats, and she hates to admit it, the decently seasoned fish. A bit bland but... it's not horrible and the tail end isn't bad enough to be charred.

She presses her lemon slice over it and it's actually good but she's not about to tell him that.

-

"We need to talk."

Katsuki halts with the last plate in her grasp, towel pressed against it, and she looks to Endeavour who is rinsing suds off his hands before wiping them dry.

"Why?" she asks suspiciously.

“My office,” is all he says, stepping back, and she watches him leave, something unsettled curling in her gut, and she glances to Fuyumi who shakes her head, looking just as lost where she’d been wiping the table clean.

Katsuki finishes the plate and puts it aside with the rest in the cupboard, gnawing on the inside of her cheek.

“He looked serious,” Fuyumi says quietly, worry in her gaze. “And he never misses family dinner. Something must have happened.”

“Lovely,” Katsuki mutters, dragging a hand through her hair. “Better get this over with then.”

-

“Sit down.”

Endeavour stands tall and broad, leaning back against his desk, a chair placed in front of it and-

Katsuki can’t tell if it’s meant to be a peace offering or if he’s meaning for it to look like he’s about to interrogate the shit out of her.

She glances towards the single cactus in the window and shoves her hands in her pockets after dragging the door shut behind her, and reluctantly makes her way over to drop down with a mulish look.

“Whatever you think I did-“

“This isn’t about you,” he interrupts her and she distractedly notices that the morning light making his red hair look like it’s alight.

“Then what is it about?” she asks, brow dipping, nails dragging against her thigh to soothe the restlessness creeping through her body. “Did something happen?”

“Before I can tell you anything you have to promise me you won’t share this with anyone.” He levels his gaze at her, serious, eyes blue and intent. “I had to call in a favour to allow you to be told in the first place and you won’t like the consequences if I find out you’ve betrayed the trust I’m putting in you with this.”

“Why bother telling me at all then? If it’s such a *risk*,” Katsuki demands, shoulders drawing tight, because she *doesn’t like this*.

“Promise me,” he presses and something in his eyes makes her

hesitate, swallowing the words that wanted to rise up in defence, to push for more information.

“I promise,” she bites out, raising her chin. “And I don’t make promises lightly.”

He searches her gaze before nodding.

Endeavour is a tall and terrifying man, built of muscles, intimidation written into every line of his body.

She tenses as he steps towards her before sinking down on one knee and it’s really fucked-up that it puts them face to face as she presses back in her chair, dragging her hands out of her pockets and grasping tight to the seat of the chair because *what the fuck-*

“Best Jeanist has gone missing.”

Katsuki forgets how to breathe, eyes widening, frozen in place as she stares at him.

“He went missing two days ago but since he’s been on leave due to his injuries from the Kamino incident his Agency didn’t notice until Saturday morning and alerted me to it then.”

“Is he-“

“We don’t know at this point.” Endeavour shakes his head as the ice in her chest stretches and claws like pinpricks. “A street camera picked-up him walking home only to stop near an alley and then disappearing from view. It is likely that, whoever is connected to his disappearance, it was someone he knew.”

“So he could be alive,” Katsuki presses forcefully as she sucks in a breath. “He might be alive-“

“I am only telling you this because I know you are close to him and I expect you to not to anything foolish about it.” Endeavour reaches out and she tenses as his broad palm curls around her shoulder, red eyes staring down at it, quite unable to comprehend the sudden turn of events. “We are doing everything in our power to make sure he returns home. Until then, you’ll work at my office and run the errands either I or my secretary asks of you.”

"At this point, there's nothing you can do."

-

There are words that had once been told to her by the shaping of her mom's elegant hands, skin brown, nails always perfectly trimmed and painted a soft pink colour.

«Don't be caught with tears on your face, habibi, that's when they know they've hurt you.»

A thumb had wiped away the wetness on her puffy cheeks, lips pressing against her forehead as she sucked in her breath and held it until no more tears were falling and she scrubs at her eyes with her sleeves.

Her mother's eyes are kind, but also hard and distant, troubled as she distractedly offers a smile.

«You would have the world, if only I could give it to you.»

-

«Look at you.»

Her mom had been smiling on her birthday.

Twenty-two-years-old, almost done with college, dressed in a suit she'd spent almost five hours fretting over before finally telling herself to just go.

She'd felt like an adult, like a proper one, staring at herself in the mirror, eyes outlined in black, hair styled in what she hoped would fit the restaurant her parents had chosen for the evening.

She remembers...

Her mom's eyes vivid and brighter than she'd ever seen them, smile falling easy on her lips, shoulder lighter, as if she'd come to peace with a lot of things in her life.

Her arms had been warm as she drew her down, because at some point she'd gotten taller than her, and when she'd pulled back-

«You didn't need me to give you the world; you're well on your way to carve your place in it all by yourself.»

«I'm so, so proud of you.»

-
Rain.

Cold lips and a betrayal that worms deep and rotten into her soul as she drowns, gasping and choking on her own blood.

-
Regret.

A horrible sort of realization as her cold fingers pawed shaking and trembling for her phone, a screen that refuses to work under the rain, blood leaving desperate smeared trails on a screen that mocks her-

I love you, Mom.

I love you, I love you, I love you-

-
I'm sorry.

Thank you for everything.

There are things that Katsuki is forced to come to terms with, and there are things she can't.

She's torn with hate, because hate is easier, because it *hurts* to not hate.

Best Jeanist makes her talk about things she'd rather not. To drag up old memories, old feelings, old realizations and it haunts her, chasing her awake in the middle of the night, sick to her stomach and gasping for air, lungs struggling to expand, the taste of iron on her tongue.

But there are good memories. Things she'd tried not to think about. Things she hadn't wanted to remember because it *hurts*.

Her nails digs into her skin over her heart, resolutely pretending everything is fine, that the light is from the phone and phone only, eyes pinpricks in a dark room as the phone rings again and again and again-

-

Sunday comes and goes.

She doesn't call the number in her pocket.

-

"Well, well, well, this is a sight for sore eyes." Hawks wings spreads wide on his back, hands lowering from where they'd been folded behind his neck, eyes flashing behind his visor as he abandoned his path to Endeavour's desk to make a beeline towards her nook.

"Hawks," Endeavour greets with displeasure. "You have work to do."

"I'll get to that, of course, Endeavour-san!" Hawks waves a dismissive hand and Katsuki gives him a flat look as he halted in-front of her and leant down far too close.

She eyes his fingers, only just reining in the urge to bite them as they coil out to poke at her cheek, her lips curling back.

"Not even a smile for me? Now I'm just feeling hurt."

His hand snakes down suddenly, two fingers curling at the edge of her collar to pull at it, and Katsuki's hand snaps out, clenching down tight, knuckles white.

Yellow hawk-like eyes bores into hers, his mouth stretching wide at the vivid anger in hers.

"What the fuck do you-"

Hawks twists his hand out of her grip and flicks the tip of her nose before he straightened out.

"Adorable as ever. The grumpiness really brings your charm to the max."

She ducks her head as his wing swept out over her, ruffling against her hair, and she flexes her fingers, wondering how much trouble she'd get into if she was to just *burn off a few of those feathers*.

She glances at Endeavour and-

She snorts because he looks like he was reining in the same urge as Hawks hauled himself up on his desk, sweeping papers to the side with a brush of his wings, mouth already moving, completely ignoring the sharp *crack* of the pen in Endeavour's hand snapping clean before

slowly being put aside as he reached for a new one with a resigned sigh.

Katsuki knows that Hawks is one of the few Heroes with more than one agency building. Ingenium had been another, Heroes with quirks made for speed that could get around to assist in situations outside their districts.

She'd never seen Endeavour and Hawks work together in news reports but-

"Hey, Zero-chan! Why don't you go get us some coffee, hm?" Hawks tilts back on the desk to look at her. "Something sweet for me and- Endeavour-san, black as usual?"

"Hawks-"

"That wasn't a no! Besides, it's already two pm and you don't look like you've taken a single break today-"

Katsuki looks down at the papers in her lap and shoves them aside with a sharp movement and pushes herself up.

"I'll get you the most disgusting sugary mess you can imagine," she promises Hawks with a flash of teeth.

His eyes flares behind the visor.

"Oh hey now, wait just a minute-"

Endeavour snags the back of his jacket and hauls him back.

"Work. Hawks."

"But-"

Katsuki kicks the door shut behind her with some satisfaction, ignoring the trembling in her hands as she stuffs them down her pockets.

-

Katsuki thinks that-

Maybe she shouldn't be surprised.

Hawks sugary pink disaster of a drink hits her boot, lid cracking open

and spilling out across the pavement beside Endeavour's tall dark coffee and her hand slaps against her neck with a curse as she spun around.

Her vision tunnels, a hand curling tight around her bicep and hauling her into the alley with a stumble, and she bumps into the chest of a white cloaked figure, fingers clawing into the fabric in a desperate attempt to steady herself.

Through a haze she identifies eerie blank eyes as he cocks his head above her, mouth moving-

Katsuki wheezes, vision darkening, ears ringing, and she collapses into arms that only just gets hold of her before she crashes to the ground.

Chapter End Notes

me, sliding in with the new arc sup?

Have I gotten over the fact that Shouto, canonically, doesn't know what a music concert is? That would be... a no.

Kudos if you can guess the movie ;) I spent a long time picking through different ones but this one is... It has such a good message, in many ways, especially in regards to what being a family is supposed to be. Good vibes.

This chapter has been messing with me like nothing else so I'm just gonna kick it at you guys and get to working on the next one because I am so ready for this like I can't even-

Katsuki... is probably not as enthused but, ya know.

Love all of you, all my smooches for you~

This has been chapter 74 of In The End. Find me on tumblr as artsy-death if you want aaaaand

I hope you enjoyed!

Rude Awakenings

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Katsuki wakes up with her cheek squished against something that smells of musk and dust on a cold, hard floor.

Her body feels like someone had run her over with a semi, stopped, and then backed right back over her in a misplaced attempt to locate her body. Her chin is wet from saliva and there's iron on her tongue, her jaw aching.

She cracks one eye open, seeing only black before she gets the other one open and through a haze locates red sneakers and too short hems.

"What-?" Her voice cracks and she coughs as she struggles to get her knees and elbows up just enough to flop herself over with a horrible wheeze.

Scraggly light blue hair, red eyes peering down at her, cracked lips spreading out in an eerie smile.

"Oh fuck no," she states blankly.

"Hello to you too." He leans closer towards her, arms folding on his knees. "I see you're alive."

"Why am I on the floor?" she groans.

He raises his elbows in a lazy shrug. "You were on the couch but you," he gestures loosely, "kinda seized and flopped down there."

"So you just left me here? Gee, *thanks*," Katsuki gets out with a scratchy voice as she wipes the drool from her chin with a trembling hand before letting it drop to the floor because *fucking hell*.

"I think you might have died for a solid minute." He sounds amused. "They dropped you off here some three hours ago. I believe they were hoping I would put in the effort of keeping you alive after you stopped breathing for the third time."

"I see you put in your utmost effort."

“Be grateful I didn’t let you crack your head open like an egg.”

She squints at him, stomach twisting as his face split into three, entirely too many fingers crowding in her vision, one hand pawing blindly back to grasp at the black fabric beneath her head and with some effort manages to yank it out from beneath her.

She stares at it.

“Wardrobe upgrade?” she asks, dragging it over herself because she’s fucking *cold* and someone had stolen both her jacket and t-shirt which, *asshole*. “Mine now,” she grumbles as she twists back on her stomach to roll the coat around herself as he watches her.

“Is this a common reaction you have to getting drugged?” he wonders.

“On the off-chance that you’ve been thinking about drugging me in the future then yes.” She paws her hand out until she finds his shoe and drags herself towards it. “Fun fact: nitroglycerin doesn’t go well with a lot of things and it’s in, ya know, my fucking *body*, because I *sweat it*.”

She curls an arm around his leg and with some effort manages to drag herself into a half-slump against his bony knee as he lifts his hands up to make space for her.

“Any idea of what they gave me?” she asks a bit woozily. “I’d really rather know if I’m gonna start hallucinating.”

“Very likely something of their own creation.” Shigaraki’s hand hovers above her head for a moment before giving it a pat and she twitches, sinking lower against his knee, lips drawing back as she digs her nails into his leg.

She stops when four fingers settles down against the crown of her head, the threat clear, and resigns herself to it with a huff.

“At least I didn’t vomit on myself.”

“Actually-“

“Let me have this one thing, Shigaraki.”

-

Katsuki dozes on and off, waking only *once* terrified out of her mind because the walls were closing in on her and, honestly, *that’s so not her*

fault.

“You drooled on my pants,” he informs her when she pries crusty eyes open, feeling like shit, but also far clearer than she’d been the last time she’d woken up.

“Stop obsessing about where my body fluids are going,” she grumbles, squishing her cheek against his thigh as his hand strokes, almost absently, over the top of her head like one might pet a cat.

It’s strange but she doesn’t *hate* that it’s Shigaraki she’s stuck with.

It’s a fucking strange realisation but he’s...

He’s fucking *calm*. Almost eerily so, and had her mind been in a better state to think about it, she might have wondered about the implications. But she’s far more taken with the steady central point he’s managing to be and-

Katsuki is fucked-up ten ways to Sunday, her body churning through whatever fucking drugs they had seemed fit to dose her with, her muscles and aching and trembling, leaving her weak as a fucking *kitten* and she’s not sure she’d be handling it nearly as well if she’d been left on her own.

Shigaraki is, at least, familiar.

I have such low standards these days, Katsuki admits a bit blearily to herself.

“Do you have any water?”

There’s a rustle of movement above her and Katsuki shoves one hand out blindly, waiting until a lukewarm bottle settled in her palm and clenching down, drawing it protectively against her chest.

She bites down on the lid, twists it off, and spits it out on the floor to roll under the couch.

She works her way through it in silence, eyes closed, Shigaraki’s hand continuing in that steady stroking motion over her aching head.

She’ll make him pay for that *later*. When she doesn’t feel like keeling over and dying might be a better option than being alive.

“Why the fuck am I here?” Katsuki gets out after a long moment, one hand squeezing down against his ankle, reassuring herself that she

wasn't, actually, hallucinating him "Like, in this room, with *you*."

Shigaraki tilts his head. "The Yakuza might be under the impression that you're actually working with me. At least to some degree." Red eyes dips to meet hers. "We are both suffering at the inhospitality of Overhaul. I turn up and what happens? I get stuck babysitting *you*."

"... Do I wanna know why they came to that conclusion?"

"They asked Himiko a question, she answered it." Two fingers taps down against her forehead. "Aren't you just the luckiest?"

"That you're becoming an associated pattern with my kidnapping? Gee, *lucky me*."

"... Give me my coat back."

"What-" Katsuki squawks, fingers clawing down at the stiff fabric as he grasped the back of it. "Don't be *petty*-"

"You're being ungrateful-"

"I've been *kidnapped*. *Again*. Excuse me for not being in the- *let go*-"

"It's *my* coat-"

"Well someone fucking stole my clothes!"

Katsuki drags Shigaraki's back into a bow with her as she hunkers into a small ball and he lets out a sigh of exasperation as he tugs at it.

"You vomited all over it. I was doing you a favour-"

"Did you *dust* my fucking vomit!? Am I inhaling *dust vomit*-"

She kicks her foot up, his fingers curling tight in a four-fingered grip around it beside his head as he gives her a flat look.

"Don't be childish."

"I don't want to hear that from *you*," Katsuki sulks as she tugs at her foot. "I'm cold and fucking miserable, let me have the damn coat."

"Say *thank you Shigaraki*."

"Your levels of petty never cease to amaze me."

“You-“

The door opens up and Katsuki drops her head back, squinting at the upside down figure who'd come to an halt, and she takes in sharp black button-up, sleeves rolled up, and white tie, before dragging her eyes up to auburn hair and a flat sort of displeased pair of eyes above a black mask.

Katsuki, flat on her back and wearing only a pair of pants and Shigaraki's coat, bares her teeth.

“Overhaul.” Shigaraki's tongue curls around the name. “I see you've finally deigned to show up.”

There are gloves on his hands; white, *surgical*.

He looks at her as if she's a speck of dirt as she yanks her foot free of Shigaraki's grip and struggles to push up and slump back against the couch, legs stretched out in-front of her, elbows digging into her thighs and hands curling lose between her legs.

She knows she looks like shit, she doesn't particularly care.

“So you're the guy who kidnapped me,” Katsuki drawls. “And *drugged* me.”

“You're filthy.”

“I don't see how that's *my* fault. Maybe you should vacuum more often,” she snips back. “At least Shigaraki was gentlemanly enough to give me his coat.”

Overhaul's eyes slides over her and up to Shigaraki but Katsuki is distracted by the white cloaked figure closing the door shut, a miniscule sort of doll-like *thing* on his shoulder that looked like it had been stitched into a mockery of plague mask, eyes round, hollow and empty.

Something about it makes the hair on the back of her neck rise as a tiny head cranes towards her.

Overhaul steps slowly towards the couch opposite them and settles down, fingers pressing together and back bent forward.

“Your office is as boring as ever, huh?”

“I already told you I don't like cluttered places,” Overhaul responds

mildly.

The miniscule... *thing* slides off a white cloaked shoulder to settle down next to Overhaul and Katsuki tracks the other as he slowly moves to circle behind them, only to halt, head tipping as she narrowed her eyes and bared her teeth.

“You’re the one who called the meeting,” the tiny thing speaks suddenly and Katsuki twitches but doesn’t remove her eyes from the white cloak. “Does that mean you’ve decided to finalize your decision and join us under the conditions discussed during our last meeting?”

Katsuki has the sinking feeling she’s been dragged into some sort of power play that she has no interest being the participant of as Shigaraki’s hand curls warningly around her shoulder as he leant forward.

“Don’t interpret things in your favour,” Shigaraki warns. “I’ve already borrowed you Toga and Twice, I’m upholding my end of the deal just fine. The Shie Hassaikai, however, has yet to impress me in return. Add to that, I found that you’ve gone out of your way to take someone who *doesn’t belong to you*.”

“And we plan on returning it,” Overhaul says mildly. “As soon as we have the information we want.”

“*Her*,” Shigaraki corrects before Katsuki even has a chance to open her mouth and she twitches in surprise, glancing up at him, but he isn’t looking at her. “I am finding that I’m not much enjoying your idea of *fair play*. First Big Sis Magne, then Compress’ arm, and now this? I’m starting to think you’re not very interested in upholding your end of the deal at all.”

“Touya-san is merely here because of my idle curiosity.” Katsuki feels Overhaul’s eyes on her and shifts her gaze to meet his. “You didn’t inform us that you had such a curious case on your hands the last time we met.”

“I found her first.” Possessiveness creeps into Shigaraki’s voice. “You-“

“My apologies, Touya-san,” Overhaul says suddenly and she narrows her eyes at him. “It appears you had an adverse reaction to the substance we developed.”

“That’s a shitty way of saying you fucked up with your drugs.” Katsuki flashes her teeth. “Should really look that over, huh?”

Shigaraki's hand on her shoulder, which had been tightening, relaxes.

Overhaul tilts his head, looking unruffled by her bite. "I'll make sure to look over it personally."

She twitches, lowering her chin into the collar of Shigaraki's coat, wary of the sudden shift of tone.

"My name is Chisaki Kai. I am the leader of the Shie Hassaikai, of which you are currently the guest of. We are an—"

"I know you're the fucking Yakuza," Katsuki huffs. "Just get to the damn point."

His eyes, not anywhere near as pretty as Mina's lovely shade of golden, lingers on her with a kind of intensity that makes her shoulders draw tight.

"You're not getting anything from her before we've negotiated." Shigaraki's hand drops down on top of her head, flattening the messy spikes. "You know what I want."

"And how I do know that she'll talk once you have it?" Overhaul looks away from her. "Touya-san has been... most disagreeable in turning up here."

"Had I known you'd have fucking drugged me I would have," Katsuki mutters under her breath. "A fair fight in a dark alley way was just too much to ask for appa—"

"Katsuki will talk, and I know you have the means to assure it," Shigaraki interrupts, tightening his hold on her. "Don't mistake me for a fool."

Overhaul spreads his hands out. "I'd rather we all had an agreeable outcome here. I want her vocal agreement to the terms."

"Yeah, *Shigaraki*, he wants to hear it from me," Katsuki hisses as she tries to worm out his grip, but he reaches down and grasps the back of her coat, yanking her back against his leg.

"Can you, for *once*, behave," he hisses in her ear.

"Impossible," Katsuki denies immediately. "Never heard the word, don't know the meaning of it."

He gives her a deeply exasperated look which, *the fucking audacity*.

“Perhaps,” Overhaul says mildly, “I should give you two time to talk it over.”

“No need.” Shigaraki straightens up.

Katsuki slams her teeth down into the inside of her cheek, heart rate shooting up, because *fuck*. Is it better to keep the charade Shigaraki, apparently, had going with her being connected to the League or-

Her instinctive reaction is *yes*. Because she has absolutely shit to bargain with, other than whatever the fuck Overhaul wanted to hear, and everything so far pointed to the fact that he had some way of getting it out of her whether she wanted it or not and he’s fucking *yakuza*. Katsuki doesn’t doubt, for one fucking second, that he’s familiar with killing – had, apparently, killed Magne, and *what’s that about Compress’ arm*? Does she want to know?

Kinda.

But *fuck*.

She curls a hand behind her back, grasping hard to Shigaraki’s leg, because she’d really, rather, prefer not dying but she doesn’t know what Shigaraki is playing at. Is she supposed to *trust him*? Was Shigaraki doing this part of Dabi’s half-assed promise to *keep her out of shit*?

Because Katsuki doesn’t *feel* very left out of shit and there’s a fucking eye on the wall and-

That’s not normal.

That’s.

Katsuki’s head tips back in morbid curiosity as it disappeared only to reappear above her, blinking red and yellow, black spreading out like the cracked and webbed destruction of someone having slammed a remote into a television screen.

“Shigaraki?”

“What?” he hisses in frustration and she realises, a bit distractedly, that she must have interrupted something but-

“There’s an eye in the ceiling.”

“An-“ He looks up. “There’s *nothing there*.”

“Ah.” A pause. “I think I’m gonna throw-up.”

She finds the shoe shoved into her spine a split second before she proceeds to do just that a smidge rude.

-

“You’re a disaster,” Shigaraki tells her.

Katsuki, hauled like a sack of potatoes over his shoulder, wheezes miserably from his bony shoulder digging into her stomach.

“You’re not exactly *helping*.”

“If you puke on me I’m turning you to dust.”

“I’d almost prefer it at this point,” she informs him, cracking one eye open, seeing only the back of his shirt. “You’re really leaving me here? In a fucking yakuza hide-out? When I asked for a vacation *this is not* what I meant.” She finds the edge of his belt with her bare toes, pressing down experimentally in an effort to ease the queasy feeling crawling up her throat-

“Shigaraki-“

He halts quite suddenly behind the cloaked white figure they’d been following, grasping the back of the coat she’d been stubbornly holding onto, and she squawks in protest as she was hauled into his arms, world spinning from the sudden lurch of vertigo and she squeezes her eyes tightly shut.

They’re moving again by the time she manages to pry them open, Shigaraki’s steps the only sound in the large stretch of underground labyrinth they were apparently in, and she looks up at him.

At some point he’d removed the hand on his face, mouth curled, red eyes flickering down towards her with an emotion she can’t quite read.

“Thanks,” she bites out grudgingly.

She’d made an attempt at walking on her own but had quite spectacularly crashed into the table, her forehead still smarting from the rudeness of it.

“You’re heavy,” he hisses in response but he does tighten his hold on her, thumb pressed carefully against his palm to avoid activating his

quirk.

-

“Don’t do anything foolish,” Shigaraki says quietly into her ear as he drops her down on the bed in an eerie blank room with only a bed and a side-door she dearly hopes leads to a bathroom.

He straightens out, intent on leaving, his eyes already sliding away from her and-

Katsuki’s hand shoots out, curling around his wrist, grasping hard and suddenly desperate, words crawling up her throat-

Don’t leave me.

She doesn’t let them form, chest rising and falling, loud in her ears, and she knows that he can feel the way she trembles as her nails digs into his wrist.

It’s a childish sort of fear that stretches out through her, filling up her heart and her lungs.

With the League she’d had Dabi and Himiko. She hadn’t been alone.

She doesn’t-

“You, Overhaul’s little minion.” His eyes doesn’t veer from hers. “Leave us.” His mouth curves. “*Now.*”

There’s a moment and then the sound of a door closing shut.

Shigaraki’s settles on top of hers, four fingers that pries her off him, and her breath hitches as he steps between her knees, hand grasping at her jaw and yanking her head forcefully up until all she can see is the red of his eyes and the lank blue locks that had grown longer since she last saw him.

“I’ve been watching you from the moment you joined U.A., *Katsuki*. I saw you on that television, chained up and made a mockery for the entire world by the *Symbol of Peace*, and I knew that you, like me, understand that there’s something wrong with this Hero Society.” His thumb presses down below her eye. “It’s written right here,” he breathes. “Fear, anger, a burning hunger for more than the world will give you, and I want it all for myself.” His mouth tips up at the corner. “If you think I’ll let someone like Overhaul steal that from me you

don't know me nearly well enough.”

He leans forward, nose brushing against the spikes of her hair.

“*Trust me.*”

It takes her mind a moment to realise that the words hadn't been given voice to – that her eyes had dipped automatically at the first shaping of his lips, reading the intent on them.

He releases her abruptly, slouching into a more familiar gait as he turns away from her, and this time she allows it. Watching as he opened the door up and waited until the hooded figure on the other side stepped aside, one hand raising in a backward wave before he disappeared from her sight.

“You've probably noticed but the drug in your blood has momentarily shut down your ability to use your quirk. It should return within the next 48 hours.” The hooded figure tilts his head. “It was a safety precaution. I'm sure you understand.”

Katsuki had, noticed, *thank you*, or she'd have blown someone up at this point, whether by accident or not, because her control always went to shit when her brain got fucked-up enough to imagine things that weren't there.

There's a *reason* as to why she isn't on a shit load of drugs – her body had always had the most crappy reactions to the different sorts they'd tried her on when she'd first woken up.

Case point: eye still staring at her from the wall, now shimmering silver.

It has no mouth but it feels like it's laughing at her.

“Fuck off,” she growls at them both, baring her teeth.

“I will bring you new clothes later, Touya-san. Overhaul still have things he wishes to discuss with you once you've rested.” He bows his head, stepping back and closing the door shut, leaving Katsuki to listen to more than one lock clicking shut.

She stares down at her hands, slowly slumping down to bury her face against them as she draws a shuddering breath.

“Mina is going to kill me,” Katsuki informs the eye that hovers above her in the ceiling. “Shinsou too, probably. And that’s if Endeavour doesn’t get to me first.”

It blinks at her.

Katsuki rolls to the side, curling the absolutely atrociously thin coat and cover around herself, doing her absolute best to cocoon herself as a shiver creeps through her body and she ducks her cold nose down with a sniffle, trying to desperately ignore the fact that everything smells like Shigaraki.

“Fucking yakuza assholes,” she mutters, pawing at her eye-

Her cheeks heat as she remembers the way Shigaraki had touched her, thumb pressing down, the look in his red eyes-

“Trust me.”

It had only been a handful of months since she’d spat at his feet, calling him out on his bullshit lack of planning, but it feels like a lifetime because something...

Something had *changed*. There’s a new surety to Shigaraki’s shoulders, a new kind of look in his eyes that burns into hers, vengeance and promise, a realisation that, as much as he’d first reminded her of James, his eyes-

His eyes reminded her of her own.

Which is a stupid fucking thought. Katsuki isn’t supposed to have it at all and she wants to scrub it from her brain because Shigaraki is almost a decade younger than her and he’d struck her as both young and foolish on their first meeting, like a child chasing the coattail of his father’s ideals without reflecting on his own.

She presses a palm against the ravaged expanse of her chest, created by the ash and dust of his palm and then chased by the blue flames of Dabi’s to keep her from bleeding out on the ground.

“I don’t do trust.” She squeezes her eyes shut, his red eyes burning on the inside of her eyelids. “I *don’t*.”

So why...

Why does she-

Chapter End Notes

Sup my dudes? We're half-way through December and I'm here to bring you another chapter.

Katsuki is up to her ears in it and absolutely not having a fun time because nitroglycerin does not a good combo make with anything chemically. But what do you know, she wasn't alone, and that... kinda makes a difference. We're gonna get more into Overhaul and what he wants and everything from there because ohhh this is about to be a journey. We have so many different bits and pieces to plot together but we're gonna get there.

Thank you all for your wonderful comments! I'm on my last week of school before break so I'm gonna have all the time to catch-up with responses to you guys after that. But know that I adore you all.

This has been chapter 75 (I can hardly believe it) and we're almost up to 300k words. Woof. I'm artsy-death on tumblr if you wanna chat there.

I hope you enjoyed!

Overhaul

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Katsuki stares at herself in the mirror.

There's black smeared across her eyes from the make-up behind her mask, her hair oily and lank from sweat, the scar on her chest stark in its gnarly horror where it spreads out, stretching up towards her shoulders and throat, down past the hem of her underwear to end just above her pelvis.

Her fingers traces over the flat expanse, over the swell of the muscles from her pecs and down the line of her stomach muscles and then up, flattening over the cold spot in her chest, just above her heart.

She closes her eyes, listening to the *thu-thump, thu-thump, thu-thump* inside its fleshy prison that is her body.

Katsuki opens them up and leans forward, staring at the dilation of her pupils in their red depth, trailing down to study her mouth curled down in a permanent sort of scowl.

She presses fingers against the corners of her mouth and pushes them up.

She stares at herself and then lets them drop, grasping the sink and letting her forehead hit the cold surface of it.

Alive, she reminds herself as she stares into the red of her eyes. *You're alive.*

She remembers...

A body, eight-years-old, a small palm pressing against the mirror, horror wide in too young eyes, nails clawing down because-

That's not me.

She'd been twenty-two when she died.

She'd liked the shape of her smile – the flash of her teeth and the gleam of her eyes when she laughed.

The boy in the mirror is wide-eyed and afraid, the colour stark red like blood.

He's not smiling.

But that had been wrong, too, because-

I'm the one who's not smiling.

She counts her fingers with a twitch of each corresponding digit - *one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten.*

Does it one more time.

A third.

She touches her ears, fingers sliding over the metal bar, thumb pressing down against the alien face of the small bead Mina had pressed in place, pinches her cheeks, traces up over the arch of her nose and down until she finds the scars on the outside of her mouth where metal had clamped down and dug in as she struggled and-

The humiliation coils like an absent and distant memory, gone before she can sink her nails into it and claw to the surface, apathy stark where she stares into a strangers familiar face.

She sweeps her tongue over her teeth, counts them, feeling the sharpness of her canines as she works over them, keeping eye contact with the mirage as she trails nails down her throat, fingers spreading out, grasping.

She slides the same hand down, smooth skin courtesy of the nitrogen produced by her skin, just like Mitsuki-

The scar is gnarly, the touch distant, nerves ruined by ash, dust and fire that had ate away at them.

She grasps her left hand, pinching down hard on the inside of her wrist, working up to her elbow, digging into the knotted nerves at the bend of it before following all the way up to her shoulder.

Does the same with her right.

My body, my body, my body-

It's a slow and arduous task to get her mind to realise that she's feeling anything at all – to shake of the apathy that had rooted down while

she slept, a bad combination of drugs and dissonance, fear that had crept up to overwhelm until her mind shut it down and she'd finally fallen asleep.

But she's been here before.

Pain is a reminder that she's alive, that she's in the body she's in, that it's *hers*. And she might not have Dabi's flames to bring her back to earth, but she just needs enough sanity for her mind to remember that one and one makes two, everything else can come later.

It's slow and Katsuki breathes with it as she works down her legs, nails scratching lines down the sensitive skin on the inside of her thighs, pressing her thumbs over her toes as she counts, once, twice, three times-

Touch is a reminder.

Pain is a better one.

It's a careful measure that has her slowly straightening out and then slam her knee up hard into the sink, hearing the sound of her skin and bone colliding against it, the pain like a surprised echo, and-

She slams her elbow back hard into the wall and it's sharper this time, pins and needles crawling up her skin where she'd pinched nerves together.

She opens her mouth and it takes her a moment, but she gets there, working stiff muscles and finding her vocal cords with a single flat-

"Ow."

For all that it's such a basic thing it's still an accomplishment.

-

Katsuki takes a shower hot enough to boil, scrubbing her skin raw, and she feels marginally more like herself when she finally steps out of it with a small shiver as cold air curls around her.

She ignores the white cloaked figure staring at her as she ambles naked back into the room.

There's clothes on the bed, two piles of them, and Katsuki pauses, staring down at them with a cocking of her head, one hand slowly stilling the scrubbing the single small towel she'd found over the

drooping wet spikes of her hair.

It hadn't been wide enough to even wrap around her waist and it's strangely stiff, as if someone had gone a bit too heavy handed on the laundry detergent.

"What's this?"

"Overhaul wanted to make sure you are comfortable for the evening," her white cloaked kidnapper tells her in a carefully blank voice.

Katsuki turns around, one hand finding its place on her hip.

"What do I call you anyway? I'm in favour of The Bastard but there's a lot of bastards and assholes around."

"You can call me Chronos," he tells her, eyes steady on hers.

It fucking bothers her that she can't get a proper read on him.

The same words keep repeating, *creepy, eerie* - his eyes blank, unbothered, uncaring of her. But he has to care for *something* or *someone*, people didn't go about their day becoming fucking yakuza out of boredom.

Did they? Shit. That would be fucking bothersome if that was the case. He's giving her absolutely nothing to work with and she wants to throw a pillow at him out of sheer pettiness.

"After the god of time? Suppose that's one way to just brand your powers for the world." She takes a step towards him, uncaring of her own nudity. "Get that creepy fucking hair of yours anywhere near me again and I'm gonna *burn it the fuck off* the second I have my powers back." She bares her teeth. "You get me?"

"I hear you," he acknowledges and Katsuki's fingers twitches because it's not promising *shit*.

She studies him for a moment longer before turning around and grabbing for the closest pair of boxers and yanking them on.

At least I'm not fucking hallucinating anymore.

-

The clothes are...

Katsuki stares at the dress, a simple black thing, and the ensemble next to it which bears a creepy similarity to what Overhaul had worn in the room.

There's power in clothes – she knows that, abstractedly, because her mom had made use of it on several occasions. In sharp suits, soft wrapped sheer scarfs, the way she meticulously lined her eyes and made sure her nails were always carefully painted pink without a chip in sight.

Mitsuki too with the click-clack of sharp heels in the halls of U.A. after the mess at the Sports Festival, lips painted blood red, eyes lined sharply in black.

Katsuki seldom bothers. She wears what catches her fancy, her wardrobe made-up of several stolen articles of clothing because she finds a strange sense of comfort in attaching feelings to things worn by others.

It's a coping mechanism, she supposes.

But she *knows*. And it makes her twitchy and paranoid because *why* these options?

It's just slacks and a button-up, she knows that too, and *yet-*

I'm overthinking things, Katsuki thinks forcefully to herself, shoving down the niggling doubt as she reaches for the dark slacks with the belt, securing it tight with a tug before she bends down and ties up the shoes over her bare feet.

Buttons-up the collared red shirt without a word but leaves the top three undone to reveal the edges of her scarred chest and ignores the tie completely where it lies on the covers.

She pauses.

And then she grabs Shigaraki's coat and throws it on top of the ensemble, feeling the way it flares behind her as she turns around.

-

Katsuki makes note of the route they take but at the end, she thinks that she might as well not have bothered.

Whatever this yakuza hide-out is it's a fucking *maze*. An underground

labyrinth of corridors that stretches wide and deep which she supposes makes *sense*.

Yakuza's are a dying breed in the age of Villains and what few remained rarely made the news. Whatever the Shie Hassaikai was it wasn't *new* but the remnants of something *old* and their head is... young.

The mask had made it hard to judge but Katsuki sincerely doubts he's much older than Shigaraki so, early twenties, at most.

An inherited title? A young yakuza *kumicho*?

From what Katsuki understood of the yakuza it branded itself as a *family*. As in *cut their ties with their families and give all their loyalty to the gang boss* kind of family, if there was such a thing. It tasted very much like an *all or nothing* type of deal to her and she thinks that there-in lies the danger of it.

If Overhaul had recently come into his title-

But even if he *had* he'd likely been raised to take the role which means that whatever people he had beneath him had already been here with that knowledge and expectation. It's not like the League where they were still learning the ins and out of each other under Shigaraki but-

Loyalty and united under a goal? Fuck, her brain is *tired* but she knows she needs to pay attention if she wants to make it out of this mess alive, Dabi's promise be damned.

She raises her head to glance at Chronos where he walks in-front of her.

Overhaul is young but it doesn't have to mean shit, she knows that too. Just like Shigaraki's red eyes had drawn something up inside of her that she hadn't expected and-

She's drawn to a point that veers on obsession to Mina, a craving to touch, to own, to understand all she has to offer that clashes with the fear that bubbles up inside of her-

Fear of what hides behind her kindness, fear of corrupting her, the fear of pulling her *down with her* because Katsuki stumbles on a jagged road of not knowing where she belongs, and she knows that-

She knows she's not a good person.

Mina is charismatic in a way that pulls her in and makes her want to never let go and Katsuki keeps having to catch herself because Mina might call her soft but they both know it's more than that and Katsuki forces herself to clamp down on the ugliness inside of her because Mina is young and Katsuki is sixteen-thirty and her soul rotten in ways she never wants the other to see.

If she hadn't met Dabi and Himiko before she met Mina she knows things could have gone down a very different path and while she loathes it she tries not to turn a blind eye to it either.

"You want them here or you wouldn't have returned."

Katsuki tries to be a good friend to Mina.

The implication that, if she'd joined the League, that she'd be trying to bring Mina with her-

The truth of it *burns*.

"It's okay." Mina had smiled at her, eyes so unbearably fucking *kind*.

But it's not okay. It's so far from fucking okay that Katsuki doesn't know how to cope with herself some days.

She doesn't want to be that person. She *doesn't*.

And if she was to join the League she knows that she'd have to-

She slams her fist out, feeling the pain of her knuckles explode and creep out through her nerves as she sucks in a breath, holds it, and then slowly lets it out as she stares at the white bones pressing up against the stretch of her skin.

I'm not a fucking Hero.

A deeper, darker, mocking part of her whispers, *oh, but you are.*

A Hero like Endeavour who twisted his oldest son to be so consumed with hatred that it threatens to burn him alive.

A Hero like All Might whose favouritism is blatant and selfish and puts the world on the shoulders of a sixteen-year-old boy.

A Hero like the hundreds who had laughed and did *nothing* as she was chained up and made a mockery for all to see.

It's the system she's a part of, however unwilling, a system she contributes to simply by existing.

I'm no better than them.

It's a bitter thought that tastes rotten on her tongue.

It's chased by a strange kind of indignation that makes her blink as it rattles through her almost childishly.

Katsuki drags her hand down her face, pausing with it over her mouth, thumb and index finger finding the scars above her lips where metal had bit down.

It's easy to get caught in spirals of self-loathing.

She's unsettled, she's been kidnapped, which would have been a whole less troublesome if they hadn't fucking *drugged her*, and-

There's another reason too, even if she doesn't want to admit to it. One that claws at her, rooted into a reminder that echoes with every hollow beat of her heart. It's doubts and wants, *desire*, indecisions and a whole lot of shitty things tangled together.

The fucked-up thing is, she thinks a bit wryly as she flexes her stinging hand, is that it's entirely of her own making.

And she's running out of time.

"Muscle spasm," she offers to Chronos blank eyes as she stuffs her hands down her pockets.

"I... see."

He stares at her for a moment longer and Katsuki stares back, relaxing only when he turned his back to her and took up his walking again.

They've been walking for a good twenty minutes. It's fucking *ridiculous* but the paranoid nature of Katsuki distantly acknowledges that it's fucking *clever* because it would give them time and her less if she managed to escape out of her fucking room.

Overhaul-

Dabi had called him a hypocrite.

He's obsessed with returning the world to what it was before.

A world without quirks.

-

A world like *hers*.

-

Katsuki thinks of the closed door at the end of the upper floor corridor.

She wonders if her mother had been crying behind it.

-

Overhaul rises from his place at a table set for dinner as she steps through the door Chronos opens up and her eyes dart around, noticing that he was the only one inside.

He's in that fancy get-up again, a near mirror of her own, and his eyes lingers on the press of the collar against her throat.

"Leave us."

There's a beat and then the doors are closing shut behind her and Katsuki's skin crawls, the hair at the back of her neck rising.

"If you were cold, I would have arranged for something warmer," he tells her as he steps around the table to pull out the chair there and Katsuki is *wary*.

Her eyes dart to his gloved hands and then up to his golden eyes that meets hers.

Dangerous, Katsuki thinks, and then, *but so am I*.

She might not have her nitroglycerin but she's never allowed herself to be reliant on it either.

And he has to actually *touch her* to use his quirk.

She's not interested in allowing him that close.

"Don't worry, Touya-san." His voice is hard to read but she notes the cadence of it, one of those that naturally drew attention to the speaker because it stood out. "We have something in common you and I," he says as he takes a step back with a gesture of his hand. "Perhaps it

could even be said that we understand the *truth* of things.”

It strikes her as funny that she’s been wine and dined for worse reasons than to be recruited into a fucking yakuza plot to, what, erase all quirks?

Unless he was planning on luring her into a false state of security before slamming a knife into her chest.

It’s not off the table.

“Is that so?” Katsuki says as she steps forward and sinks into the chair as Overhaul’s gloved fingers brushes along the edge of the table before he takes his seat opposite her.

Careful, controlled.

Calculated.

Not just here because of his pretty quirk or pretty face, Katsuki decides as she studies him.

All five of his fingers are contained within his gloves which meant that, unlike Shigaraki and Round Cheek, he likely had some sort of control over the use of his quirk. Which makes *sense* because he could disassemble *and* assemble.

Hopefully the use of it was contained to his hands only.

It’s likely, she decides. But she just doesn't know.

“Of course.” He reaches up, index fingers finding the hoops wrapped around his ears, slipping them off and removing his mask before folding it up and placing it aside on the table. “This Hero Society is sick and the quirks are its disease, spreading without a sign of stopping. In fact – you’ve heard about the quirk singularity, have you not, Touya-san?”

“I have,” she admits as he reaches for a bottle of red wine, fingers curling around the bottom of it as he pours for her first, the ruby red liquid bringing her mind to blood as it pools in the glass.

She doesn’t recognise the brand but she’ll bet money it’s a fucking expensive one. The scent of it tickles at her nose – deep, rich and heady.

The Quirk Singularity.

The idea that quirks would continue to develop to a point where no one would be able to control them anymore- yeah, it's not so fucking farfetched. She sees the signs of it in Dabi who burns too hot for his body to handle, in Sparky who can produce over a million volt of electricity but completely lacks any sort of fucking control.

At little as a hundred volt could kill a human in the right conditions.

It's fucking *terrifying*.

The hair on the back of her neck rises because-

Overhaul looks at her as if he knows exactly what she's thinking and she doesn't much appreciate it, lips drawing back.

"The world is in need of a cure."

He reaches for a small spoon and Katsuki reflexively glances to her own plate, realising with a blink of surprise that – out of all foods he'd picked *hitsumabushi*. She only recognises it because Masaru had taken her out to visit a temple in Nagoya after she'd been expelled for the third time.

It had been the closest thing to a vacation she'd had in this world and she remembers the temple garden, the silence broken only by Masaru guiding her from one step to the other.

The green tea, nori, chopped onions, wasabi – everything had been arranged for the traditional way of eating it. The tea pot at the top, the three bowls at the bottom-

Which makes the red wine an outlier and just a touch bizarre.

But also – *he's not intending on making this a short dinner*.

Clever, and a bit of a bastard move.

She supposes she can appreciate that.

"And you're, what, the one to bring it?" Katsuki asks as she reaches for her own spoon.

They better not have fucking drugged this, she thinks as she parts the rice and eel for her first serving.

For many years the world she's in doesn't feel very real at all.

She's twenty-two-years old and surrounded by snot-nosed brats whose loud voices makes her sink deeper and deeper into her hoodie.

There's recess and story times read aloud from books, biting remarks that gets her marched out into the corridor to hold buckets of water with the crying ringing through her head, chased by the soothing cadence of the teacher trying to quiet them.

It's having crayons pressed into her hands, scissors small and blunt, math reduced to the multiplication table, a mind-numbing sort of boredom that gnaws at her day out and day in, the content on her phone and computer monitored, group works that she finishes on her own and gets scolded for, fingers twitching as she buries her nose deeper into a comic during recess and hears the teachers gossiping about her because no-matter how anti-social and cruel and spiteful she gets-

"He'll be an amazing Hero one day, with a quirk like that."

It's parent-teacher conferences, disappointment after disappointment, heads being shaken, but also leeway and indulgent smiles, eyes sliding away, turning blind to bruised fists and a broken nose, a body that gets too thin before it starts filling out again, odd disappearances met with fond sighs and half-hearted chiding when she returns smelling of cigarette smoke.

"I won't tell your parents but you have to promise me you'll stop! You'll need those lungs to be healthy when you're a Hero."

She doesn't but she learns to listen to the adults *just enough* to avoid the dragging hours of detention.

Mostly.

She's an adult in a child's body, a straight-A student, on paper everything about her scores her an easy path to U.A. and everything else gets carefully tidied out to make way for her.

Midnight... is the first to look her in the eye and tell her something that she's known for years but refused to think about.

That- it had screwed her over in ways she still struggles to grasp at.

The world hadn't felt real.

Her body hadn't been *hers*.

The scuffles she got into had been the closest she got to any sort of *feeling* outside the fear and horror that burned constant and strange inside if her, distant and twisted and all-consuming at the same time.

"It makes you feel alive, doesn't it?"

Dabi's eyes had gleamed as he found her, blood dripping from her nose, a dark bruise spreading across her cheek as she narrowed her eyes at his approach.

"I bet I can do you one better."

She'd been entranced by the blue flame that blossomed up.

And then she'd been *livid*.

Her existence in this world had dawned with a choked and gasped breath, Dabi's flames burning against her hip, his mouth curled up in amusement as she *howled*, skin sizzling and burning beneath his touch, nerves aflame, chasing through her in a way that smarting bruises and lungs burning beneath the surface of the water had never managed.

Wide-eyed, breath loud in her ears, the pain adding clarity to a world that had felt hollow as he slowly lifted his hand up to admire his handiwork.

Her fingers keeps finding the charred mark the weeks following their first meeting. To touch something that was wholly and undeniably *hers* in a world that had robbed her of everything.

Twenty-six and twelve.

That's how old she is when she meets someone who doesn't treat her as a child despite the body she's stuck in and he comes and goes like a stray cat out of her life.

Dabi centers her, makes her want *more*, and he *gives it to her*, without hesitation or doubt, his eyes hungry, his touch addicting, reassuring, grounding in all the best ways as pleasure chases through her.

He's the first to see and accept her for what she is.

A thirty-year-old dead woman hidden in the flesh of a sixteen-year-old dead boy.

And there's no hesitation in his acceptance as his mouth presses against hers.

-

The world doesn't feel real until it *does*.

With the touch of a hand that *burns*.

But she remains an ill-fit piece inside of it, the truth of her hidden like a shameful secret that can be exploited by those who know and still doubt.

Her fate, her very existence, held in the hands of the Heroes meant to protect her.

-

Katsuki sits in clothes not her own, food half-way finished as Overhaul dabs at the corners of his mouth with a napkin before folding it aside.

The explanation of his quirk rings inside her mind as he places his elbow against the table and leans to rest his cheek against three gloved fingers, golden eyes gleaming.

“You understand what I’m offering, don’t you, Touya-san?”

I understand, Katsuki thinks as she curls her hands tight in her lap, *that you’re far more dangerous than I’d first assumed*.

Want and desire, a body that isn’t hers but *is*, frail and uncertain, the feeling still so *new*.

And he was offering to give her back what *was*.

-

To tear her apart and rebuild her with a touch of his hand.

Chapter End Notes

The title of this chapter just fits so well, doesn't it? Ah.

Katsuki is still shaking off the lingering effects of being drugged while threading into a dangerous game between the LOV and Hassaikai and we have a lot of machinations at works behind the scenes.

I debated a lot about Overhaul and Katsuki's meeting but I do believe his interest in her is unavoidable for a lot of different reasons. He's an... interesting character.

He's charismatic and you don't gain the loyalty he has for nothing.

I'm still catching my footing with the realisation that I actually have a break and will be catching up to your comments in the following days. I'm really looking forward to it - I absolutely love reading your responses and responding.

But before that I'mma kick chapter 76 at you guys. I'm artsy-death on tumblr if you wanna catch me there.

I hope you enjoyed!

Ceiling Eyes

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Katsuki lies sprawled back in bed, one arm thrown over her eyes.

She can feel the rise and fall of her chest, the way her ribs expands as air fills her lungs, the sound of her heartbeat, wet and quiet inside of her.

The fingers on her hands twitches in rhythm to it, *one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten-*

She has no idea if anyone other than the League knows she's even been kidnapped, that's the reality of the situation. There were no-one around to see her and it wasn't like Endeavour harboured any sort of trust that she'd stick around in the first place.

Mina...

She supposes Mina and Shinsou could suspect something but who the fuck listens to kids *anyway*. And they'd both be busy with their respective Hero-Studies on top of that.

She still doesn't know where Mina would be doing hers.

Had she promised to call her? Text her? Katsuki doesn't remember, her brain is still foggy from the drugs and so damn fucking *tired*. It's a feeling that dredges thick inside of her, like sludge, and makes her feel heavy and listless where she lies.

She wiggles her toes just to remind herself they're still there.

Breathes out a low frustrated breath as she drags her arm off and-

There's eyes in the ceiling.

Not *an* eye but yellow, awfully fucking familiar pair of eyes, peering down at her through a gridwork of metal high above her and she sees lips in the shadows, the peek of a single gleaming fang.

"Himiko?"

"Kasu-chan!" The responding voice is delighted, echoing inside the

small ventilation system. "I found you!"

"You—" There's a feeling flooding through her, desperation and relief alike and something far more warm chasing at the heels of it as her mouth stretches in response. "You sure fucking did," she breathes out. "Are you—" Her teeth sinks down into her lip.

Fingers fold through the metal, grasping tight, a face squishing down against it.

"I'm real!" Himiko assures her feverishly. "I'm real, Kasu-chan! Don't you worry! I promised Tomura I'd find you and I did! I know how I can prove it to you too—" There's a rustle, her face momentarily disappearing, and then something small was being slipped down through one of the holes.

Katsuki reaches out automatically, fingers curling around the wrap of nicotine, the paper black, branded with that familiar blue ace of spades as she turns it around in her fingers.

"Dabi sent a whole package but I don't think I can fit it," Himiko giggles as her eyes return. "Believe me now?"

"I do," Katsuki agrees as she folds her fingers tight around it, careful not to squish it. "What are you doing here?"

"*Mou*, Kasu-chan, I'm here for you of course!" Himiko responds chidingly. "You weren't supposed to be kidnapped at all, you know? We had a whole plan! But you didn't even last Monday, Kasu-chan." Himiko angles her face to make sure Katsuki could see her pout. "What's the point of living with the Number One Hero if he can't even keep you from getting kidnapped a single day?"

"Maybe he's just a shitty Hero," Katsuki snorts. "'s not my fault." She squints up. "Anyone know I'm missing?"

Himiko shakes her head. "I don't think so? There's nothing in the news or anything," she offers. "But they don't matter because I'm here! And Twice too!"

"I heard." Katsuki rubs at the side of her face. "You have business to finish first though, don't you?"

There's a moment of silence and the fingers folded through the metal of the vent lid press tight against it.

"I'm sorry," Himiko whispers, so quiet that Katsuki just barely picks up on it.

"Don't worry about it," Katsuki huffs. "I don't-" She drags a hand down her face. "I don't expect you to just abandon everything to get me out." Because she *doesn't* – the League had already lost Magne and Compress had been hurt and they were still *here* because they're gunning for the big picture and Katsuki... is just one person in the smaller picture. "I don't," she repeats. "It's *fine*, Himiko."

"But it's my fault." Himiko's voice is small. "I told him about you."

"Because someone in the Hassaikai has a shitty quirk," Katsuki rebuffs. "I know you wouldn't have said anything if it wasn't for that."

And... Katsuki realises that, she believes that.

"I wouldn't," Himiko's voice is firm. "I *wouldn't*, Kasu-chan."

"Then there you go, don't sweat it." Katsuki tries for a smile but she's not sure her mouth truly knows how to do it and grimaces instead.

"Thank you for coming here. You didn't have to, but you did. That's'- that's great. Honestly."

"You still owe me a kiss, right?" Himiko says hopefully.

"I do," Katsuki snorts. "Go, before someone figures out you're gone."

Himiko's fingers draws back through the ventilation grid.

"Hey, Himiko?"

Yellow eyes reappear.

"I'm sorry about Magne," Katsuki tells her quietly.

Himiko's mouth stretches out in a feral sort of smile.

"I'll be back, Kasu-chan." Her eyes gleams above her. "And if he touches a single hair on you before then, I'mma *kill him*."

-

Katsuki... doesn't want to think about it.

But she has to.

There's just no fucking way she can keep ignoring it, even if the desire is there.

And, fuck, she has time to kill anyway.

In a world of quirks, she hadn't actually expected to meet someone like Overhaul. The idea hadn't even crossed her mind and, if she's honest, she hadn't *wanted* to think about it. Realistically, the very fucking concept is just absolutely *terrifying* and the implications of such a power, it makes nausea curl inside of her.

Katsuki isn't stupid enough to say *yes*.

That's the simple reality of it.

It has nothing to do with the fact that he's yakuza. It wouldn't have mattered if he was a Hero or a Villain or if he'd won the most trustworthy person of the fucking year award. The *hell* she'd allow someone to just- *remake all that she is*.

Fuck that.

(She's still working out the kinks of it happening *once*, fucking hell she doesn't think she'd be able to handle a second turn of it).

And... it's strange to realize but she... she doesn't *want to*.

Not just because the idea terrifies her but because she just genuinely doesn't *want it*.

It's a rocky path to stumble upon, being who she is, *accepting* who she is.

Not Amélie. Not Kacchan.

Touya Katsuki.

A thirty-year-old dead woman in a sixteen-year-old dead boy's.

But, that isn't true either.

It's *her* body.

Every scar, hers.

A history of her life in this world painted where blue flames had burned their path over ash and dust. A scar on her arm with two

puncture wound above it where Himiko's fangs her dug in as she drank from her. Scratches and thick skin on her knuckles from the fights she'd gotten into, places where her skin had scraped raw in odd discolorations when All Might had sent her careening down the road-

Even the scars around her mouth where the metal had bit in is *hers*.

There's no returning to what was. Even if, by some miracle, Overhaul could make an approximation of what Amélie had been it still wouldn't be *her*. It'd just be damn farce because that body had had its history too – marks and aches, a particular fondness for sweets that this body lacked, the ends of her hair curling up hopelessly-

Amélie is dead and she has been for eight years.

But there are other things he could do too, her brain whispers and Katsuki's fingers trails down to her pants, dipping past the hem and pressing down over her boxers and her cock. It's soft, limp where it lays, a strange addition to herself that she'd struggled to accept.

She squeezes down, feeling the way the cotton presses against her, eyes closing shut.

She hasn't masturbated in this body.

Hadn't even thought about sex before Dabi had pressed down against her with a teasing roll of his hips and she'd surprised them both with her response.

It had felt strange, like it wasn't something she was supposed to do. But-

She squirms her shoulders down, reaching for the belt of her slacks, rucking them down with a lift of her rump to get them half-way down her thighs before she circles her cock with her fingers as she drops back down on the covers.

It's warm, circumcised and smooth in her palm and she bites down on her lower lip because how was she even supposed to-

She squeezes tight around the root and drags her fist slowly up and then down with a press of the heel of her palm, pausing.

Katsuki swallows and closes her eyes.

"You're a fucking wonder," Dabi's voice ghosts through her mind and

she grasps for the memory, the feeling of his hot breath against her ear-

He'd hauled her up to easily, one arm looping tight around her to keep her back pressed tight against his chest, his mouth sealing warm and wet as he sucked on her ear, teeth scraping down against the shell of it-

His hands had been warm and calloused, his chest firm where he'd curled himself around her, and she remembers the way his scent had curled down her lungs, thick and heady, ash and salt on her tongue from his come.

She feels herself slowly hardening, breath picking up as she tried to find the echo of a ghostly rhythm.

She strokes down and then up, following the curve of it in a clumsy echo of the way his thumb had curled over the tip to catch the pre-cup there before-

She groans, hips arching into the firm twist.

"Just like that," Dabi's voice urges her on and her motions grows surer, firmer, egged with something almost desperate. *"Feels good, doesn't it?"*

And it *does*.

Katsuki rolls to the side to bite down on the pillow, feeling the way her cock throbs in her palm, the way something curls thick through her, edging her closer and closer with every stroke, and it's almost like they're back there together, in that small bed in the upstairs bedroom in a shitty bar-

Overwhelming, heady, the knowledge that, he knew who she was, that he didn't *care*, that it had only made him want her *more*.

She comes with a jerk of her hips and a low groan muffled by the pillow, hand curling down and up, making sure she was well and truly spent before opening her mouth with a shuddering breath as she rolls back, blinking a bit blearily at the ceiling.

Yeah, she's quite *fine* with having a cock, she decides as she raises her hand to her mouth and swipes her tongue over it.

Pauses with a wrinkle of her nose and wipes the rest off on her slacks.

Maybe things aren't ideal. Maybe it's downright shitty sometimes but-

Shit, that's just *life*. And she's not more or less a woman with or without a cock- it's just who she is. And society can, quite frankly, fuck itself if it doesn't want to accept that. She doesn't *care* that people are shitty on the internet or if she gets misgendered by people she'll never even meet again anyway because they don't *matter*.

Fucking extras, the boy's voice hisses in agreement deep, deep inside of her and Katsuki's mouth stretches out.

"Fucking extras," she agrees.

-

Katsuki is seated crisscross on her bed, down to her underwear, pants half-heartedly scrubbed and left to dry in the shower as she stares down at her hand, fingers folding down, stretching out, brow furrowed as she tried to reach for that feeling she *knew* was supposed to be there but-

It's like her hands had forgotten how to fucking *sweat*.

"Weird ass fucking drugs," Katsuki grumbles, glancing up and towards the door but-

There's no-one there. It's been hours. She wants food because food is *good* – it would help her body work through the drugs and regain energy she desperately needed.

There's only so much water can do, and while she'll keep sticking her head under the faucet and drink until she's nauseous, she's craving a fucking cheese pizza so *badly*. Something hot and greasy and damn delicious would just be absolutely fucking fantastic.

She wonders if the yakuza takes requests.

They were trying to recruit her, weren't they? A cheese pizza was the *least* they could do for her.

She rubs her palms roughly together, feeling the heat produced, squeezing her palms tight, waiting, and fucking *nothing*.

Katsuki's body is weird. There's nothing normal about sweating nitroglycerin which means that there's things inside of her wired to produce it and then allow it through her hands.

It had taken her over two years to figure out that, her feet had been able to do it too, and the realization had been around the time she finally found a way to properly shut her sweat glands off and not have nitroglycerin being produced constantly because that had been fucking *hellish*.

She'd been very, very determined because she'd been terrified of even touching herself least she left a smear of nitroglycerin to blow up in her face.

Or blow *off* her face.

She'd never thought she'd fucking *miss* it.

"A day of realizations, huh," Katsuki breathes out, right thumb digging into her left palm, rubbing in a circular pattern to ease the tense muscles there and, maybe, hopefully, get her body to take a damn hint.

Forty-eight hours, Chronos had claimed, but that meant shit the moment they'd injected the drug into her blood stream. Maybe in its pure form, assuming there was one, it could have been that, but they'd made it into some sort of knock-out thing that had fucked her right over and nearly killed her.

The hallucinations hadn't been fun either.

Her thumb pauses and she reaches up to touch the cigarette tucked behind her ear in reassurance before resuming again as she tips over to press the side of her face against the cold wall.

She doesn't know what to do about Overhaul.

He's charismatic and the fucker knows it. Everything about the dinner had been planned and the center piece had been himself, his voice a cadence that wasn't horrible to listen to, what he had to say fantastically idealistic and naïve to the high heavens, and, *maybe* she'd even agreed with more than she was interested in admitting to.

But just straight up fucking removing quirks wouldn't create some fucking *utopia*.

For all that Katsuki still misses her world, and quirks still terrify the hell out of her, she knows that her world hadn't been *better*. It's just the same kind of shitty thing but in another shitty shape. Heroes and Villains as entertainment as opposed to soldiers feverishly adored and

praised by the masses as they left to fight in wars of their countries own making.

Her mom's personal library had been rows upon rows of books on war. A very small section had been dedication to books she'd gotten as gifts, or perhaps won during a lottery at work.

An even smaller section had been hard cover comics Amélie had thought her mother might appreciate when she was in her preteens and convinced there was absolutely nothing cooler.

(To her mom's credit, she'd read every single one, and Katsuki remembers the many evenings where the dinner table discussion had been a feverish debate about the proper sign-name for her Hero or Villain obsession of the week. Her mom had also had a remarkable ability to snuff out deeper themes and explorations that had, in the end, only furthered her daughter's obsession with comics).

But the majority of it had been war. Thick history books, published biographies, stories told on blogs or in diaries from fellow survivors that got printed and carefully bound and preserved inside her mother's study.

There was nothing from the war she'd escaped.

Katsuki supposes it might just have been her way of dealing and coping with what she went through while putting some sort of distance between herself and what had happened.

(Best Jeanist had agreed when she hesitantly brought it up during one of her stays in his apartment. It had felt weird to talk to him about it but... Best Jeanist didn't judge, he just sat there and listened and helped her sort shit out, and it wasn't like she could ask her mom herself, and *besides*, it was strangely liberating to have some of her own thoughts on it confirmed by another person).

Katsuki had read her fair share of them, too. At first, when she was too young to truly understand the severity of it, just as an attempt to get closer to her mom, and as she got older, it had just been one of those interests that followed her along through life.

War isn't glorious, it's fucking *obscene*.

And it doesn't *end* just because a history book prints a day and date to be celebrated. Torture, violence, thousands of women raped by enemy soldiers to give birth only to be shamed by their families, society-

Lives that are ruined, lives that end, those who keep on living even when they want nothing more than for everything to end because they're lost *everything*. Nightmares and gaunt faces, those that flee their homes and search for new beginnings only to be rejected because of where they're from and the colour of their skin-

It's soldiers that come home with blood on their hands and the knowledge of what they've done and experienced to a society that isn't interested in dealing with the aftermath of it, who'd rather close their eyes and pretend that mental health issues isn't fucking *rampant* because being a soldier is supposed to be heroic and good but it *isn't*.

Aizawa had mentioned the same and Katsuki knows how deaf and blind this world is to the issues it's Heroes have to deal with when human lives get put in the shoulders of singular humans.

Frankly, All Might is a fucking poster boy for it – ruining himself so badly he'd fucked-up himself into an early death from those issues alone if someone didn't get a knife into him before that.

Publically wasting away and no-one gives a fuck. It's a fucking *joke*.

It's not named as such, but in a way, this Hero society is driving its own war against Villains, in slapping the moniker in every single criminal, mindless to reason, erasing any form of redemption or new start by blaring their faces for the whole world to see and branding it all as *entertainment*.

And the Villains are rising up in response with the League in the steps of All For One who has been around for fucking *forever* and had done this song and fucking dance before.

Deku... it had been hard to puzzle together what little information he knew about All For One but none of it had been exactly *encouraging*.

There's going to be a war, in name, it's fucking inevitable at this point. Endeavour just isn't enough to stop it, is possibly even escalating it because, *hah*, turns out that being a fucking bastard of a father might just come back to haunt you.

And Dabi is out for blood.

Which brings the interesting question of, *would Overhaul's plan stop the war?*

Press X for fucking *doubt*.

If he could, by some sheer fucking miracle, actually do what he wanted to do on such a wide-spread basis that he'd miraculously got to all of society-

Then All For One was still there with an endless supply of quirks that he could just willy-nilly stuff into people because *that's* just not horrifying as *fuck*.

And if Overhaul managed to kill him before that then-

What about future generations? No one fucking knew why there were quirks in the first place. Did his serum erase it so completely that kids wouldn't be born with quirks? And what the *hell* would even happen to those with mutant quirks?

Katsuki tries to picture Gang Orca as... well, as something other than a fucking orca and she *can't*. Would it just *kill him*? She can't see how a serum like that would even work on mutant quirks unless Overhaul was planning on just reshaping people *before* he fucked them up.

What happens to a human who have been a fucking blob their entire life and you just-

Because her hands aren't producing fucking *sweat*. If her quirk hadn't been focused into her hands and feet and she just *stopped* then she'd just fucking overheat and potentially *die*.

Katsuki *sincerely* doubts that the serum Overhaul had fucking *somehow* cobbled together had gone through the proper scientific trials to guarantee that a lot of people wouldn't just *plain die*. And there were people out there like Shitty Hair that would be damn hard to get a needle into and hardening quirks in their different forms weren't exactly *rare*.

And what the fuck even is the serum anyway? The whole thing reeks of another quirk being involved somehow because Overhaul is just enough of a hypocrite that it wouldn't surprise her one fucking *bit*.

Because if there's a quirk like Aizawa's out there, there sure as fuck can be something else like it.

Her bet is that there's more to the entire situation and in a world where the yakuza name is dying she'd bet her fucking money on it being some sort of gamble for the *new era of yakuza* or some shit like that.

Because *why* wouldn't Shigaraki be here if there wasn't some sort of underground gamble for power at work? Katsuki isn't *stupid*. She can put one and two together fucking *thank you*.

Katsuki knows that, just straight up rejecting the offer Overhaul had made could be well and truly hazardous to her health.

But.

She looks up at the metal grid of the ceiling vent and-

Overhaul's hideout is a maze. The likelihood of her getting out without a quirk to rely on is...

Katsuki drums her fingers against her bare knee with some consideration.

She's probably fuck up some plans. *But*.

She only needs to be alive to get out and well, she thinks Himiko would understand.

Katsuki stretches her arms out, fingers folding together in a stretch, and she hums.

"Ceiling vent it is."

Chapter End Notes

Sup guys? It's 3 am and I'm here to deliveeeeer. I hope everything is going great for you all unlike Katsuki who is in the very enjoyable position of *well fuck this*.

I contemplated uploading this for New Years but who knows, maybe I can squeeze out the 78 by then, ya never know. But I wanted to make sure you all had this before the end of 2020 so I'm chucking it right up.

As some of you guessed last chapter, Katsuki just... isn't terribly interested in having someone messing with her body. But I do think it was good for her to be confronted with the option of having a choice about it because- she's still struggling with things, that's just how it is. She's had so many choices taken out of her hands and that's left her feeling helpless because she's had (and still has in many ways) a complete lack of control of her life.

Himiko... I always try to weigh carefully what the League is and

wants in interactions like this. They lost Magne to Overhaul and they're still there- they're not just going to abandon the path their on to get Katsuki out of there that minute, that would be... yeah. So it's a dangerous game at work here because there's a lot of powerful people who want different things on the playing field.

Anyway, we know our girl, sitting around and playing nice isn't exactly her *modus operandi*.

(And we, uh, keep having our sex discoveries when kidnapped, huh, Katsuki?)

This year has been amazing with you guys, sincerely thank you. I can't believe we're so close to hitting 300k words with this chapter and you're all hanging in there and just- so much joy in writing and sharing this with you guys.

An early toast to you all.

(I celebrated by getting an actual proper chair for my desk so no more writing while hunched over on my bed!! Absolutely fucking fantastic tbh.)

Thank you for being here and I hope you all enjoy chapter 78 and keep enjoying *In The End* in 2021.

Dusty Encounters

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

It takes Katsuki some deft jerry rigging of a toothpaste cap, balanced on her bed hauled up to be tilted against the wall, to get the first screw loose. After that it turns a fair bit smoother as she uses the flat side of the first screw to twist loose the other three and nearly drops the entire thing upon herself as the weight hits her too far on the side tilted into the air to reach.

Her feet hits the ground, knees bending with a grunt, and she lets out a whoosh of air as she drops it on the floor with a deft noise.

Right.

No getting that back up, she thinks wryly as she squints up.

She trots into the bathroom to fetch her pants, securing them tight with the belt, and stuffs the screws down her pocket along with the toothbrush that had been provided for her.

There's little else worth taking in the room, bare as it is. Shampoo, conditioner, soap, all of it smelling rather like a hospital room, were the only things they had given her other than the clothes.

She hadn't been able to find a security cam, and considering no-one had decided to make an appearance and stop her, she's fairly confident they just hadn't bothered with one. Which meant that, they were either very confident in the security they had in place, or they'd decided that no-one were stupid enough to try and escape.

Katsuki isn't so optimistic to think she'll get out.

But *shit* if she's gonna be as good as a duck sitting around waiting to be fucking shot.

-

Katsuki is regretting not bringing the soap with her.

It hits her as she's curved downwards in the tight space, trying to fit her body in the small space and into the tunnel to her left. Downwards

is an endless fucking stretch of a dark hole and she's trembling as she pushes against the wall, shoulders barely fitting, and her breath trembles, too fast, her shoulders too tense and-

Fuck she needs to calm down. She needs to *breathe* but the thought of being *stuck* and left to rot inside the air ventilation system-

She sucks in a breath, feeling her arms press against the walls of the tight space, blinking spots from her vision as she slowly releases it.

Does it again.

Her arms are trapped beneath her body in a bend and she slowly wiggles one out, and then the second one, muscles aching as she twists until she gets one leg against the wall and presses her body blindly deeper because turning back is absolutely out of the possibility.

It's slow work and she feels rather like a clumsy snake as the space narrows in places and she's left wiggling on her belly at an achingly slow space until it, blissfully, widens up again, and the panic wiring through her eases for a beat of her heart.

She misses her quirk something fierce. Just a spark and she'd been out of this ventilation system fucking ages ago but she doesn't have it. It's locked away from her where she can't reach it and Katsuki-

Katsuki fucking *resents it*.

She presses her forehead against the cold metal, aware of the cold sweat against her back, the way there's fine trembles running up and down her body, her breath shallow and nails scraping down as her eyes prickles with wetness.

Trust me, Shigaraki had told her and a part of her regrets not staying but fuck, Katsuki *doesn't want to be reliant on anyone*.

She *hates* that she's in this position again. Kidnapped as if- as if she was just a part on a chessboard to be shuffled around. A pawn at the very fucking best.

She wishes she was the queen but her body is sixteen and her powers still growing with her.

Might never reach the heights of Endeavour of All Might in terms of power. She *knows that*.

But she fucking hates it.

"I'll be the Best!"

She wheezes out a miserable laugh because she's quirkless and wiggling through the air ventilation system of a fucking yakuza hide-out like a coward.

"Pathetic," she pants at herself as she lifts her head up and squints down the dark system.

There's cobwebs and dust clinging to her hair and clothes, some itching at her right eyelashes, and there's nothing that speaks of an end in sight.

But Katsuki reaches one arm out, palm flattening down, pulling herself inch by stubborn inch forward because *what else is there to do?*

-

Katsuki ends up taking a long nap in a curve after scaring an eight legged thing away, exhaustion hitting her like a freight train and eyes flagging shut between one breath and the other.

-

She wakes up with it huddled under the curl of her palm and she lifts it up just enough to reveal the black eyes and its brown furred body. If she's not entirely off about it, the thing is a huntsman spider, which would explain the lack of webs in this particular corner and she snorts as its front legs lifts up, one reaching out.

She presses her left index finger against it and it shies back, shrinking in the darkness of her palm.

"I'm not gonna squish you," she tells it, voice coming out thick. "But I'd fucking love if you could show me a way out."

She lifts her hand from it and bends down and blows down against it.

It twitches back, frozen for a moment, and then it was turning and Katsuki stares it disappears down the tight space with a rapid *tap-tap-tap* against the metal.

"... Too much to hope for it'd actually wait for me," she huffs as she jerks her shoulders forward, squirming properly around the corner, and using her feet to push her a good deal forward as she shifted to

using her elbows to shuffle forward as the tight space.

-

She's thirsty, her stomach rumbling, and she has no idea how long she's been going for but Katsuki knows that she needs to find a good place to get the hell out of there.

She wiggles downwards, avoiding the first turn and squares her shoulders tight as she inches down, twisting until she could get in feet first, and her stomach aches as she drags herself up by the bend of her knees, palms pressing against the wall to ease the last bit in, and she breathes out.

Turning is going to be harder like this, she knows, and there's no fucking way she'll be able to tell where the hell she's going.

But she just needs to find a good metal grid to kick down and she latches onto that thought as she presses blindly back into the darkness.

-

How the fuck does Himiko do this, Katsuki wonders, stuck in the darkness of the ventilation shaft.

There's a stream of light from below her, because of course it is, and she huffs a tired breath against it.

It's not the first she's found, had passed several like it, but it means she's on the wrong level again.

"Fucking maze ass-"

-

By the time Katsuki actually gets out of the ventilation system she's wet with sweat, aching and tired but so very fucking *relieved*, and she kicks the metal aside with a petulant jerk of her foot where she sits on the floor, feeling rather like a dusty, sweaty *mess*.

The room is wide, dark and glows eerily with small pinprick green lamps in places around her, but to Katsuki it tastes like freedom.

She ruffles her hair, sneezes, and grimaces as she wipes cobweb away from her eyelashes.

Katsuki spares the time to kick the metal back in just enough that it isn't overly obvious she'd half-desperately almost kicked a hole in the middle of it and secures it with nails that barely latches on.

Then and only then does she straighten out and properly takes in her surroundings.

... Which isn't much considering the fact that there were zero proper lamps about.

She snaps her fingers but there's still not answering spark so she's left inching forward, one arm extended blindly, sliding along the wall and out against something metal that feels rather like filing cabinets beneath the pads of her fingers, and her brow furrows as she picks up on a slow, faint beeping noise and-

She walks solidly into a door and swears as she jerks back, scowling at it because *really*.

Katsuki twists the knob around and to her surprise it clicks open and she sidles cautiously into the room, pulling it firmly shut behind her.

There's a lamp above a bed and the scent of staleness brings her memory to a hospital room, the beep of the machine confirmed with a glance to be a heartbeat monitor, and she raises an eyebrow at the old man breathing in and out into a ventilation mask.

"What a miserable way to be left to rot," Katsuki grunts without any real sympathy as she ambles over and yanks the nearest drawer out.

There's, unsurprisingly so, a bunch of medical equipment there and her mouth curves up because *score*.

She grabs for the two scalpels in a folded up case and stuffs them down her back pocket after inching the handles up to be easily grasped. There's drugs and she scans over the names, recognising most of them after a bit of brain searching. Had been on several during her own hospital visits.

She finds a needle and a bottle of Alteplase which she's *kinda* certain is used to treat someone in the event of a stroke. The little information thing she folds out from it lets her know that side-effects included bleeding and vomiting blood which – well, it's fucking *something*.

She sticks the needle in it and fills it up to the max before she caps it off and slides it carefully down her pocket, making sure it was

pressing against the side of her thigh.

She pours a handful of different pills into her pocket too along with it, making sure to leave none empty as she tucks them back in place.

The sleeping man doesn't as much as twitch and she leans over him, studying the ashen face.

The bags and medical equipment around her all pointed to it being a long-time thing and she lifts his shoulder up, checking for bedsores, finding none, which meant that this wasn't just anyone who'd been discarded and forgotten.

She contemplates if taking him hostage might do something but-

She doesn't know the quirks of the people in the yakuza. For all she knew one of them could pass through walls like that third year Mina had happily chatted about and Katsuki would just find herself in more trouble.

The odds doesn't feel very tempting and it's not her style anyway.

She drops him back down, wiping her hand against her thigh because, *urgh*.

Giving the room one last cursory glance she shrugs and turns around, trotting off to hopefully find a door that gets her *out*.

-

Out of all the room Katsuki peers into the bathroom feels like a fucking gift from heaven and she spends just a bit too much time chugging water and scrubbing her face clean of dust. Her hair is dusty grey in colour and her clothes hopelessly creased with dirt in thick lumps that are entirely uninterested in unsticking from her.

But the water eases the headache that had been crawling up on her and at least she doesn't have to pee in a corner somewhere.

She'd already peed down one of the ventilation shafts which had been an entirely uncomfortable endeavour that she never wanted to repeat again.

Hands thoroughly washed and feeling remarkably less like a dusty chinchilla she closes the door shut behind her.

For all that the yakuza hide-out is a fucking maze it's also eerily

empty and after what has to be *at least* two hours of walking around aimlessly she stops sliding around every corner and the panic eases into something closer to boredom.

She feels like she's walking in *circles*, and she probably *is*, but it's not like she can just blow up a wall and short-cut her way out so she's stuck doing it like this.

Katsuki halts and breathes out, staring down a dark corridor, no end in sight.

"At least there's space," she tells herself with optimism she doesn't necessarily feel as she massages a hand against the tense muscles of her neck.

She wishes, a bit absently, that she'd found a fucking Tylenol in the old man's room because she's got a headache again.

-

If the Shie Hassaikai hasn't realised she's missing by now then-

Well, they for sure has, Katsuki has to count on the fact that they have. How interested they were in investing time and effort into finding her were another question. They might just count on her popping up eventually, especially if they were watching whatever door or doors led to the fucking outside.

She doesn't know, doesn't think it particularly matter.

Is more interested in buying herself time far, far away from Overhaul before she doesn't know how to handle him.

And the thought of sharing anything personal about herself with him makes her skin crawl.

People who are smooth, charming and know how to talk their way around things are *dangerous*.

Katsuki still struggles with reading the cadence and inflections in people's voices, though she's very aware of the way their faces shift, and sometimes it clashes and it's so minute in the detail that it just leaves her second-guessing herself without understanding why.

She prefers bluntness, always has. Can be a bit assholeish because of it but she doesn't enjoy dancing around subjects.

She's *very* aware of the fact that between the two of them Overhaul has the upperhand in every way possible and removing herself from the situation was better than lingering around and waiting for herself to put her foot in her mouth.

Something tells her he'd be far less patient with her than Shigaraki had been.

-

Most of the room she finds are bare bones empty. Some of them have boxes, old stuff clearly left and forgotten, and searching through some of them lends her to suspect that Shie Hassaikai might have been much bigger once upon a time.

But whatever Overhaul ran wasn't big. That much is clear. And unsurprising, really.

He didn't strike her as a person who trusted easily and whoever he had following all showed signs of a kind of fanatical devotion that wasn't just stumbled upon.

She trades her dusty pants out for a pair of jeans patched in places with flowery designs in one such room.

It strikes her as very old school yakuza, different from crisp suits or intricate designed jackets. More likely to have belonged to someone low-rank, she supposes after critically going over the threading, though they had been folded away with care in a plastic bag along with a bunch of other clothes.

There are jackets too, some rich with hand-stitched designs in fine threading, all of them branded with the sign for the eight precepts of death.

A twisted take on the eight precepts of moral guidelines within Buddhism. A *reverse* maybe, Katsuki thinks as she rummages around in hopes of finding a simple t-shirt among the things because her button-up reeks.

She doesn't remember all of them but she's *very* certain at least one of them was an abstinence from taking life and... something about not taking what is not given? And abstinence from false speech?

Yeah, Overhaul wasn't really upholding those were well.

She gives up and ends up shrugging into a fine button-up with a lotus stitched in painful detail blossoming up from the bottom left side of it blue. It's surprisingly soft and fits her decently which she counts as a win.

Katsuki gives Shigaraki's cloak a good dusting off before swinging it back over it, covering up the sign of the Shie Hassaikai.

There are boxes with rings and other jewellery as well, most of it pretty outdated from how the yakuza branded itself in modern society. The whole Villain and Hero outfits had bled in even here though Overhaul clearly favoured the classic slacks, button-up and tie.

Some of the rings are pretty cool and she eyes a shisa faced one for a long moment before grabbing a sturdy chain that she slips down her pocket.

-

Returns five minutes later and stuffs it down her pocket before kicking the door shut behind her.

-

Katsuki finds a locked door.

It's nothing special, nothing different from the rest of the doors she'd found, but it doesn't open up when she twists the knob around and her interest is immediately piqued.

She peers down both direction on the corridor before crouching down, reaching for one of the scalpels, thin, not exactly a debit card but-

"Hello?"

The voice, *young*, Katsuki realises with something that curls dark and unpleasant in her chest as she stares at the door, muscles bunching tight, scalped frozen in place where she'd wiggled it in.

"Overhaul?" There's a beat of numb silence where Katsuki, quite frankly, don't know what to do. "Chrono?"

Katsuki clenches her teeth and bends the lock open with a firm twist of her hand and there's a sound of small bare feet against the floor stumbling back as she steps inside and firmly shuts the door firmly behind her.

Red eyes, are the first thing Katsuki notices as she stares at the small terrified girl, arms wrapped around her thin body, *like mine*. Her hair is long, pale blue, messy and knotted in places, arms and legs wrapped in bandages, a small horn protruding from her forehead.

The room is bare, a single bed, new toys still in their boxes discarded on the floor.

She's afraid, Katsuki's mind notices a bit distantly, her heart pounding in her chest.

She looks like a medical experiment, another part of her notices a bit dourly as her fingers curls tight against her palms.

I'm the one scaring her.

"Katsuki," she blurts out, like a fucking *idiot*. "My name," she tags on a bit lamely as the child remains frozen in place, eyes wide in her thin face. "I'm... fuck. Look-" Katsuki crouches down because she remembers how awful it had been with adults looming over her. "I'm not here to hurt you. I'm... a bit lost, to be frank, and I happened to stumble upon your room." The girl's chest barely rises with her breaths. "What's... what's your name?"

The girl looks rather like she doesn't know what to make of her.

Which is *fair* because Katsuki, frankly, don't know what to make of her either.

Why the fuck is there a child here, she wonders with a curl of panic and anger and something ugly that blossoms inside of her the longer she stares at the other. At the bandages and at the gaunt face where wide scared eyes are locked onto her in the backdrop of a room that doesn't feel like much care had been put into it at all.

"Eri," the other answers after a long moment of silence. "My name is Eri."

"That's a cool name," Katsuki gets out a bit thickly. "I'm, uh, I'm a girl – like you. And- and a Hero."

It tastes like a lie.

"A Hero?" The girl's voice lilts curiously, brows dipping, hands shifting to grasp into the fabric of the shirt-like dress someone had shoved over her head. "Like- like that green haired boy?"

Katsuki stares at her.

No, she thinks. *The odds are fucking astronomical. There's no way in hell she's-*

“Did he have freckles?”

The girl's head tilts. “Freckles?” she echoes.

“Little dark spots on his cheeks. Like this.” Katsuki presses the pads of her fingers against her cheeks and the girl tracks the motion. “And green hair, kinda my length but, messier. Green eyes. And-“ She ransacks her mind. “A green suit,” she settles on finally. “He probably tried to smile at you because he's a fuc-fudging dork,” Katsuki stumbles over her words.

Eri's eyes gets bigger and bigger as she talks.

“Yes!” she squeaks out. “You know him?”

Katsuki drops her ass down on the floor, scrubbing both hands through her hair as the girl regards her cautiously, hands clenching tight where they'd previously been fiddling.

“Of course you know Deku,” she huffs. “He's my old classmate,” she admits, squinting at the girl.

Had Deku gotten hurt or something? The kid was *obsessive* about keeping people out of danger, she couldn't really rationalize a situation where he'd willingly let this girl go home with someone like Overhaul.

“Do you know the blond haired boy too?” Eri asks, still keeping a fair distance, but the fact that she knew Deku had clearly made her less scary because there's curiosity in her eyes.

“Nope,” Katsuki admits bluntly because as far as she knew there were no blondes in her old class doing the Hero-Study thing. “Sorry,” she tacks awkwardly when the girl wilts. “What are you doing here anyway?” she wonders, staring at her.

Was it too blunt to ask if she'd been kidnapped? Eri...

Katsuki for sure isn't blind and the signs are kinda blaring.

Abuse, past, recent for sure, and she eyes the horn on her forehead, wondering what kind of quirk she had, because there's pieces slotting

together in her head, the only reason she can think of *why* Overhaul would have a child locked up in his maze of a fucking hideout.

A small hand curls around a bandaged elbow, the crook of it to be more accurate, and Katsuki-

Katsuki has an ill feeling.

She kinda wants to vomit actually because if she's on the right track then-

The anger flares through her but she wrestles it down because *now* is *not* the fucking time and place to be angry because *this isn't right*. But scaring the girl further would serve nothing and Katsuki might not like children but she *knows* and stands by the fact that children deserves happy homes and a chance at growing up without being afraid.

For a heartbeat she pictures short black hair and turquoise eyes in place of light blue and red eyes.

(Wonders if Dabi had looked up at his father with fear burning in his eyes before it twisted into that all-consuming anger).

Katsuki doesn't know what to do.

She can't leave her here. But how the *fuck* is she supposed to get a small girl out when she can't even get herself out? Without her quirk she has no way to take short-cuts or defend herself or fight. She's next to fucking *useless*.

It stings but it's true and Katsuki isn't idealistic enough to try and convince herself otherwise.

"Are you... hurt right now?" she asks cautiously as the girl toes a bit closer and she tries to keep her body language loose where she sits on the floor, feet bare and hair still dusty from her ventilation adventures. "Is that why you have bandages?" She holds out her hand, not beckoning but-

She reaches for memories of Mitsuki and Masaru.

Patience, *kindness*, always waiting for her to reach back, never rushing her. Sometimes just sitting with her, holding her when she would had been so frail and disconnected that she'd hardly been able to make sense of her own self or place in it.

She doesn't understand children. Had never once found any kind of connection to those who were supposed to be her peers, or even much of a patience for them.

Hadn't given a shit about them if she's perfectly blunt with herself.

The world hadn't felt real.

The people in it even less so.

But the hand that stretches out towards her is warm as Katsuki catches it, careful not to actually press down more than brushing the surface of her skin as it twitches back.

Katsuki's shoulders draws tight as it settles down properly at a second attempt, red eyes darting between their hands and up to her face, a small bare foot hesitantly inching closer as she remained patiently in place, and then braver with a second step, and Katsuki swallows as small fingers curves to grasp onto her palm.

Right.

And then after a beat-

Fuck.

Chapter End Notes

Katsuki, crawling around the air vents like a dusty chinchilla:
finds child.

Is wildly horrified about finding said child.

I tried to rationalize the Shie Hassaikai having an actual security system but then, they had a six-year-old get out of their actual hideout so- instead we have ceiling vent Katsuki because it made more sense to me. You don't have a hide-out that is practically a maze without purpose. It's security but a different sort of security, ya know?

I am wildly tired and my entire winter break was busier than anticipated but I am baaack with a chapter for you guys and now I'm gonna sleep because this week is vaguely hellish and it's waaaay late.

I hope everything is awesome with you guys! Much love to all of you.

I'm artsy-death on tumblr and this has been chapter 78 of In The End and we've hit 300k. I'll celebrate when I'm not seeing double anymore, lmao.

Cheers!

Please [drop by the Archive and comment](#) to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!